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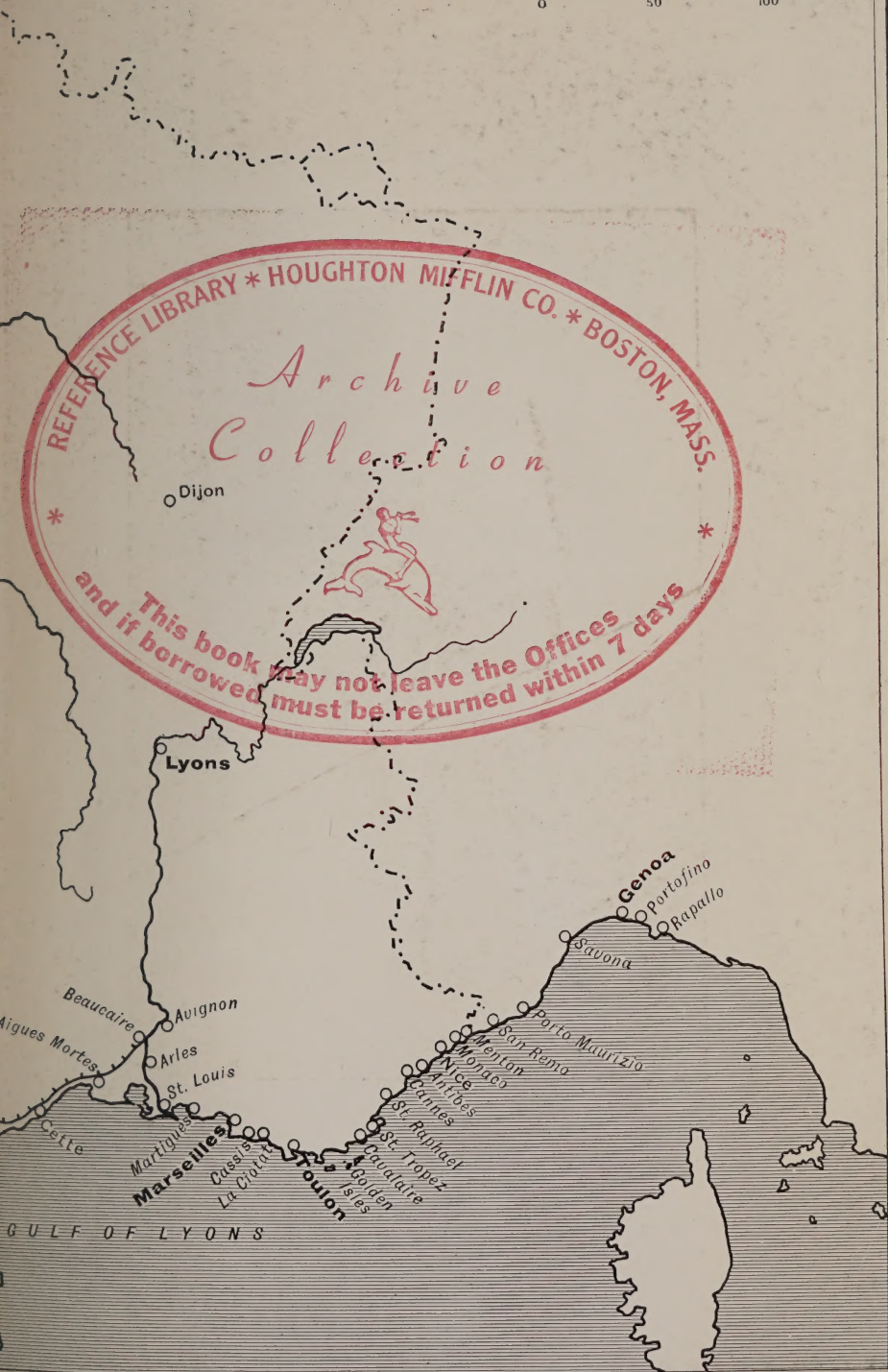
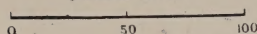
Toulouse

Castelnaudary

Carcassonne

FRANCE

Statute Miles



MOTOR CRUISING IN FRANCE



Photo, Charles, Concarneau.

A CONCARNEAU SARDINE PACKER.

MOTOR CRUISING IN FRANCE

From Brittany to the Riviera

BY

CAPTAIN LESLIE RICHARDSON

(OFFICIER D'ACADEMIE)

Author of "Vagabond Days in Brittany,"

"Things Seen on the Riviera." etc.

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PREFACE

THIS is an account of cruising in a motor-boat, from the rugged cliffs of Brittany, down the waterways of France to the sun-kissed shores of the Riviera. The reader will visit the rock-bound islands of the Bay of Biscay, the old world towns of La Rochelle, Carcassonne, Arles, and Aigues Mortes, great cities such as Toulouse, Bordeaux, Nantes, Marseilles and Genoa, picturesque fishing ports like Cette, Concarneau, and Les Sables d'Olonne, the mighty rivers of France, the Rhone, the Loire, and the Garonne—beauty spots and pleasure resorts such as Royan, Nice, Monte Carlo, Cannes, Menton, San Remo, and Portofino. He will make the acquaintance of bargees and fisher-lasses, coasting skippers, lock-keepers and sardine-fishermen. He will navigate the storm-tossed waters of the Bay of Biscay and the tideless Mediterranean. And having done so should he fit out a boat of his own and follow in the wake of *Sylvabelle* the author will consider himself amply paid for the trouble of writing these logs.

L. R.

MENTON, 1925.

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Part I
1922—1923

CHAPTER I

The Ship and her Crew

LET me first explain the name "Sylvabelle." I wanted an original name ; easy to pronounce in both English and French, and not unpleasing to the ear ; a name, if possible, of pleasant memory. Hence, "Sylvabelle," which is the name of a delightful cove in the sun-kissed Bay of Cavalaire, one of the most charming places on the coast of Provence.

Now for the little ship herself. I wanted a boat that would take me to the outer fishing-grounds and home in time for dinner. A boat aboard which I could sleep two in the cabin and a paid hand in the engine-room, with a roomy cockpit for fishing. Thus I could go away for fishing cruises from time to time, and live aboard while navigating the canals from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean on the occasion of my spring and autumn migration. I did not want a ship in which to cross the Atlantic in a gale of wind, but one which would "get me home out of it" as expeditiously and comfortably as possible. I can find no pleasure in a small yacht in a gale of wind, however beamy and seaworthy. I had to decide whether I wanted a motor-boat with auxiliary

sails or a sailing-boat with an auxiliary motor. I chose the former, knowing that I should use the motor more than the sails, at any rate on the Mediterranean, where it either blows too hard to put to sea, or a flat calm reigns for days. The shallow draught of a motor-boat would be a great comfort, for I am an inveterate ditch crawler—never more happy than when nosing up some tidal river or cosy creek. Next, I decided that anything under 26 feet overall would be too short to carry way through the short, heavy swell one so frequently encounters in winter in the Mediterranean for days after a “mistral” has been blowing.

Then I decided that 14 h.p. should be the minimum and that it would be cheaper in the long run to have a more powerful engine than I could really do with, and run it at a reasonable number of revolutions; and, finally, I found that, by economizing on fancy finish and cabin fittings, the sum of money I was prepared to spend on the boat would buy me a 16 h.p. Aster (Paris), which would give me between seven and eight knots at 900 r.p.m. After obtaining specifications from various firms in England and France, I decided to build with Rondet, of Nantes, and between us, after a good deal of experimenting and modification, we evolved *Sylvabelle*.

I claim nothing novel for my boat, except that she is more pleasing to the eye than most of her type, by reason of her coach-house cabin top, which obviates that “made by the mile and sawn off short” appearance, while the little fore-deck and wholesome water-ways, with a hand-rail on

the cabin top, make it a less slippery and dangerous job to go forward and let go the anchor in a sea-way. The raking mast brings the sail plan well aft, without having the mast just where I want a good big hatch to obtain plenty of air below, for it can be very hot in the South of France in the spring.

The most important thing in a motor-boat is the engine, and I gave mine the place of honour in an engine-room which occupies the beamiest part of the boat. My engine is thus thoroughly protected and every part is accessible. In the cabin are two good sofa-berths, with plenty of lockers and cupboards in which to stow clothes and stores when cruising. Naturally being a shallow-draught boat, there was not so much locker space as in a wind-jammer.

Talking of wind-jammers reminds me that I have not yet placed on record the fact that *Sylvabelle* carries a small foresail and a loose-footed mainsail, which is, in reality, a slightly modified sliding gunter. It would be idle to pretend that *Sylvabelle* will turn to windward like a witch, although, with the exception of a wind dead ahead, she will amble along quite nicely under canvas ; indeed, when whiffing for pollack or mackerel, we frequently have to pull a reef down and hand the foresail. It is often a moot point with vessels where power is auxiliary to sails, whether to beat to windward under power and canvas or whether to stow the sails and lay a direct course under power alone ; time, tide, and petrol consumption being, of course, the chief factors to be taken into

consideration. In the case of *Sylvabelle*, essentially a power-boat, I never proceeded to windward under canvas. It is rather a problem to trim the ballast of a motor-cruiser in such a way that she will do her best under power without having her slightly by the head when under canvas alone.

It was decided to give *Sylvabelle* a run on the inland waterways of Nantes before putting to sea for a cruise on the Breton coast. I have never shot a tiger, but those who have assure me that it provides the greatest thrill to be experienced in a life of sport ; however that may be, no one will ever prevent me from thinking that the trial trip of a new boat must run fairly close the decease of our feline friend.

It was a boat 26 feet 3 inches length overall, 6 feet 7 inches beam, and a maximum draught aft of 3 feet, that I found awaiting me at the Isle of Versailles, where M. Rondet has his yard on the River Erdre, one of the many waterways of Nantes. Like most old-established boat-builders in any country, Rondet's yard takes some finding. Nantes is a city of many rivers and canals, and has been compared to Venice, Rotterdam, and various other waterside resorts. The Island of Versailles is joined to the rest of Nantes by a quaint bridge ; it is inhabited by boatbuilders, " sabot " makers, and motor mechanics, of whom the Rondet family are the oldest inhabitants, for the firm was founded many years ago by the present owner's father. A veritable boat-lover's paradise is the Island of Versailles ; tied up to stakes all round the island are craft of every description,



IN ROYAN HARBOUR.



SYLVABELLE II AT PORT CROS ISLAND.

from outriggers with sliding seats to fishing smacks, barges, and yachts. Motor-craft predominate; these are of every conceivable shape and form, from outboard dinghies to racers that have won many a prize in their day; nor are utility craft lacking—there are runabouts, and even an Arca-chon *pinasse*.

At first one has to go slowly on the River Erdre for fear of swamping the washerwomen's barges moored along the bank. But soon we are out of the city and running along through pleasant park-like country; here and there are country houses, with lawns down to the water's edge in Thames-side style. We now let her out, and by the time we come to a kind of Norfolk Broad, with large patches of reeds and water-lilies, with fishermen in beamy, shallow boats, *Sylvabelle* is exceeding the stipulated seven knots. We land at Sucé, and after admiring a 22-lb. pike in a glass case, lunch beneath a shady arbour, and christen *Sylvabelle* in a bumper of Moët et Chandon, extra dry.

The beginning of this narrative finds *Sylvabelle* at the most picturesque fishing port in Europe, Concarneau, on the Atlantic coast of Brittany. I was in search of a crew to accompany me on a cruise from Brittany to the Riviera. Corentin, my paid hand, was a most efficient and hard-working mariner, but hardly ideal as a companion for shore excursions. In reality a sardine fisherman of Concarneau, Corentin had done a deal of yacht work in pre-war days and had sailed as deck-hand in steamers to all parts of the world. A bachelor of forty, I could not have found a better paid

hand for my purpose ; Corentin knew the Mediterranean almost as well as his native Brittany, so that I was secure in the technical side of my crew. What was required to complete the ship's company was a cheery companion, fond of the sea, and free both from "funk" and sea-sickness. The man of my choice I hoped to recruit from the ranks of the international band of artists that forgathers every summer at Concarneau during the fishing season.

At Concarneau, the Festival of the Blue Nets was in progress. This "Fête des Filets Bleus"—the sardine nets are dyed blue—is held every year to provide funds to enable the sardine-fishers and their families to tide over the hungry months of winter which follow on a bad season's fishing. For the sardine is a most capricious little fish, and frequently fails to put in an appearance. The life and soul of this festival are the pretty little Bretonnes, who work in the canning factories and mend the blue nets ; but even their laughter and vivacity would do little to fill the coffers of the fund were it not aided by the sage advice of worthy townsmen and the unflagging efforts of the hundred and one artists who seek inspiration for their masterpieces among the fishers and fishing craft of the old-world port. After a procession of Bretons in costume and the Queen of the Blue Nets riding on a huge tunny fish, a fair was held in the precincts of the old walled town on an island in the midst of the harbour. And it was here that I found the second member of my crew disguised as a clown in the Artists' amateur circus,

a Scandinavian known henceforward in these pages as the Viking. After we had enjoyed a very picturesque procession of illuminated fishing-boats round the ancient walls of the old town, at midnight, after the Viking had danced with her Maids of Honour and wished the little dark-eyed Queen of the Blue Nets good night, we went aboard *Sylvabelle* and, late as it was, discussed routes, courses and itineraries far into the summer night.

CHAPTER II

The Start of the Cruise

IT was at six o'clock on the following evening that Corentin reported the anchor weighed, and we motored out through the home-coming fishing fleet. Not to have seen Concarneau Harbour during the sardine and tunny season is to have missed one of the most wonderful sights in Europe. Big smacks are the tunny boats, about 90 feet long, and each seems to have chosen a different coloured hull, all shades of green, grey, red, white, and blue being represented. But it is in the selection of their canvas that the skippers display an eye for colour. Rarely are two sails of one boat of the same hue : a blue topsail set over a yellow mainsail will be shipmates with a mizzen and head sails of tan, white or ochre. Aboard the smaller, black-hulled sardine smacks the nets are hoisted to the mast-head to dry, and are streaming out like whiffs of blue cigarette smoke against the mellow walls of the old town.

Our destination was Pont Aven, a village at the head of a pretty estuary, and only a couple of hours run, so that we proceeded out of Concarneau Harbour at a prudent speed, in spite of which we had several risky encounters with sardine

smacks in the narrow entrance. These were the stragglers, and being the last home, were in a hurry, their huge lugs boomed out to catch the last of the dying breeze. It was interesting to watch the smacks pass: the old skipper at the helm; the crew, a weather-beaten mass of sombre colour, discussing the probable price of the catch; the boy, with another hand, is in the tender towing astern; having washed out the nets amid the crying of gulls, he has fallen asleep. His head is hanging over the side, and he is kneeling, regardless of the water that is washing about ankle deep in the boat. It will take more than that to awaken him, for his is the sleep of fatigue, the healthy sleep of boyhood.

Our course lay along a low shore of golden sand dunes and granite boulders until we had given the Soldiers' Reef a wide berth and rounded the rock-bound Trevignon Point. We then threaded the channel between the Ragunes Peninsula and the Ile Verte. Soon I recognized the Port Manech Hotel, old quarters of pre-war summers. The land at the mouth of the Aven estuary is higher than anywhere else along the coast, and is formed of brown rocks, in winter ceaselessly flogged by the wind and waves of howling gales, in summer, sun-baked, the haunt of rabbits and green lizards. From the rocks at the base of these cliffs fine bass and large grey mullet are sometimes caught by the patient angler. The hotel, built in the form of a fort, a hollow square, white, and flat-roofed, gives a Moorish air to the landscape, and the more imaginative might charm the little lighthouse on

the point into a golden-domed minaret. Inside the bar we found but little water, for the flood tide had only just begun to make itself felt. Very alluring was the tiny harbour of Port Manech, with a score of black-hulled sardine-craft aground, the blue smoke from their galley fires mingling with the cornflower blue of their nets drying from the mast-head. The engine was switched off, and we drifted slowly up the river on the young flood tide, past the charming fisher hamlet of Rosbraz and the tall towers of a feudal castle silhouetted against the sky, tinted orange by the warm glow of the setting sun. A prawn-boat crept out towards a windless sea, passing us in the tortuous channel through the mud flats alive with curlew uttering their plaintive cry to the fast-approaching night. It was quite dark when we stepped ashore on Pont Aven quay, not a sound broke the night but the creaking and clacking of the water mills.

In spite of a light railway and the general onrush of modern civilization, Pont Aven is still very typical of an ancient Breton village. Nowhere else in Brittany are so many mills or such jovial millers with pretty daughters in charming old world costumes with Elizabethan caps and collars. At Pont Aven dwelt the Breton bard, Botrel, who saw to it that the old dresses, dances and customs were not allowed to die out, and we witnessed a Gavotte danced in ancient costumes to the tunes of two pipers mounted on up-turned cider-barrels. Many years ago, the little town was discovered by a band of Paris art students, to whom we owe the comfortable hotel founded

by Mdle Julia Guillou, whom novel readers will remember figured as Yvonne in Mr. Vachell's delightful *Face of Clay*. In the dining-room of the old hotel (for there is now a huge annex), hangs the original mask or "Face of Clay" over the framed M.S. dedication to Mdle Julia.

Besides many country rambles through the woods and over the wild moorlands, we made several fishing expeditions down the estuary and across to the Glenan Islands some twelve miles out in the Atlantic. Fishing apart, these islands are well worth a visit. The scenery, by reason of its lack of altitude, is picturesque rather than grand, but the Glenans are the refuge of lovers of the wild. Not a fisherman on the coast, however ill he has been used by winter wind and wave, but has a word of affection for the Glenans. Then there are the birds; sea-birds rarely found on other parts of the coast make their home on the Glenans. What a delight to the nature-lover to watch these winged fishermen wheeling above the tide, diving, from time to time, in search of their quarry. What a delight to behold the waders reposing on some brown rock or spit of golden sand. There are five principal islands with several smaller sand-banks and rocks. On St. Nicholas there is a rough inn of sorts and a vast store-pond for crabs, lobsters and crawfish belonging to Prunier's celebrated fish restaurant in Paris. On Drennec is the largest farm, with horses and a threshing machine. On Loch are a ruined factory, and a pond harbouring rare species of wild fowl. On Cigogne Island is a venerable circular fort said

to have been built by the English at the time of the Wars of the League. I am not a botanist, and therefore unable to check the veracity of the following statement, but it is claimed that *Narcissus reflexus* grows on the Glenans, and nowhere else in the world except on the neighbouring island of Groix. It is difficult to ascribe to what is due the charm of these islands, a charm strongly felt by the Bretons themselves. All the seafarers of the coast speak of the Glenans with enthusiasm. Their wildness and lack of convention seem to form a vent-hole for the savagery in the Breton character. Just as the young Corsican takes to the *Maquis*, and the Basque to a smuggling trip across the Pyrenees, so the Breton of South Finistère sails over to the Glenans in order to shake off the trappings of an oppressive civilization. There are many lovers of the old traditions to whom the wild Glenans appeal. The Celt, ever a dreamer, is being driven to the far west; these islands of the Atlantic are his last sanctuary. Watch the gleam in Corentin's eye as he tells us of the old wild days in the Glenans. Fierce fights, boats stove in, cracked pates. A month's earnings spent in a night's carouse at the *auberge* on St. Nicholas. Marvellous catches of lobsters, rabbits caught in sardine nets. Those were "the good old days" of the Breton fisherman.

A favourite run for *Sylvabelle* was down the pretty river through the narrows, with huge granite boulders scattered in profusion along the steep wooded banks to the mouth of the Aven. Here we would explore the twin estuary of the

Belon. Like the Aven, the Belon rejoices in that bugbear to mariners, a bar. At summer spring tides an expanse of golden sands, the haunt of sand-eels, plaice, dabs, and sometimes even bass, this bar becomes, in winter onshore gales, a foaming mass of mountainous breakers, and a menace to such mosquito craft as frequent the estuary. Nothing more charming, however, than a summer cruise up the Belon River. Like the mariners of Hereward the Wake we sail boldly in over the bar, for it is nearly high water, and soon we are speeding up over the flood tide between wooded banks until the estuary begins to close in. On the port hand we spy a long low-built cottage, the home of the famous Belon River oysters. Here they are fondly tended in their final stages before being brought ashore for dispatch to the tables of the elect of Paris.

With fishing and cruising, it will be seen that a very pleasant stay was made at Pont Aven, but there were many more creeks and bays, estuaries and islands to explore ; moreover, the sea was calling.

CHAPTER III

We Cross to Belle-Ile-en-Mer

THE morning of August 29 saw *Sylvabelle* dropping down the Aven on the ebb, past sunny little Rosbraz, over the bar out unto the blue blue waters of the open Atlantic. Astern, we left the brown rocks and white hotel of Port Manech as we headed south for the mystic Island of Groix, once the land of Druidesses, shrouded in mist. The sea was of an oily calm and quite innocent of wind ; a pall of black smoke besmirched the heavens where a destroyer from Lorient was running her speed trials over the measured mile off the Ile Verte. Brigneau and Douelan, fisher hamlets along the coast, were passed before there was sufficient of a fair westerly wind to make it worth our while to set the mainsail and foresail. This event occurred off the estuary of Le Pouldu, a charming bathing resort for lovers of the simple life at the mouth of the beautiful Laïta, a river leading up to old-world Quimperlé. This is classic ground for the modern painter, for here it was that Gaugin spent a winter, even unsophisticated Pont Aven being too *mondain* for him. I mention this river because it is so lovely that I was almost turned from my original intention of crossing to

Belle Ile, but the fair wind decided me to carry on. I hate to see a fair wind running to seed.

While we were eating our lunch, the course was altered to avoid disturbing the sardine boats fishing half-way between the island of Groix and the mainland. This is one of the most picturesque forms of fishing. Imagine a fleet of black-hulled luggers and cutters hove-to under shortened canvas while the crew of each pull, slowly, head to wind in a rowing boat. Erect in the stern of the latter stands the skipper casting out handfulls of *rogue* on either side of the blue net which is towing astern. A wily, capricious fish is the sardine, and he will not go into the net of his own accord. The net is simply a wall of a very fine netting towed astern of the boat ; by throwing the *rogue* first on one side of the net and then on the other the fish are tempted into the net. *La rogue* consists of cods' roe mixed with flour ground from the arachis nut. Every year there comes to Concarneau a sailing-vessel from Bergen, in Norway, loaded with barrels of cods' roe, which is also shipped over from Hull. Another interesting annual visitor is an Italian sailing ship from Viareggio with a cargo of Lucca oil for tinning the sardines when caught. It is the oil that makes the sardine palatable, and it may be news to some folk that tinned sardines, like wine, improve with keeping. It is a fishery for calm water, summer seas, both nets and fish being too fragile for handling in rough weather, though boats and men are weather-proof. The latter are from all the ports along the coasts of Finistère and Morbihan ; they

wear blue drill overalls, except the men from Douarnenez, who may be distinguished by their brown kit. Some are smallholders, who till their tiny farms in winter and put to sea for the sardine-fishing in summer, clad in blue and black velvet and broadcloth of a cut that was in vogue when King Hal sat on the throne of Merry England.

We now passed close into the Island of Groix and could observe the tunny craft in Port Tudy Harbour. The men of Groix are counted the most intrepid seamen of Brittany ; they are employed in tunny-fishing in summer and trawling in winter. Tunny being rarely met with inside a line drawn from the Scillies to Cape Finisterre (Spain), the smacks need to be good sea-boats and fast, for the tunny are caught like mackerel on a whiffing line. The Biscay tunny differs from the Mediterranean species, the flesh of the latter being redder in colour. Their habits are also dissimilar, the Mediterranean tunny being taken in nets close inshore while those of the Atlantic are caught on hook and line far from land. The Biscay tunny fishery was first started some thirty years ago, not by the Bretons, but by men of the Charente Inferieure and the Vendée from La Rochelle and Les Sables d'Olonne, though they were soon followed by the enterprising fishers of Groix. The boats fit out in June and lay up in November. Two booms, or bobbing poles, are carried like giant fishing-rods up and down the main mast, one on each side. When clear of harbour they are lowered at right angles to the main mast after the manner of a spinnaker boom. Eight lines are

carried on each boom. At the end of each line is a double barbless hook on which is tied a huge fly made from the flower of the maize plant. Skimming over the water astern of the fast sailing-boat this fly imitates a flying fish and is greedily snapped at by the faster-moving tunny. The great enemies of the tunny-fishers are the porpoises and belugas, or white whales; they take the bait before the tunnies have time to seize it, and the French Government offer a reward for the head of each of these vermin landed. Very graceful are the boats with their booms lowered, skimming over the summer sea like giant butterflies. Catches and prices vary tremendously. In hot, calm weather it is by no means unusual, though ice is carried, for a smack to lose her entire catch before she can make the shore. The fish are carried on deck in wooden racks covered over with tarpaulins. Ferried ashore in boats they are carried up the quays to carts, often in the arms of women, like babies. The animation of the quays of a tunny port, with cart-load after cart-load of the great fish being driven off to the canning factories, must be seen to be believed. I have already described the gay-coloured hulls and sails of the tunny-craft at Concarneau; except in the breeziest of weather the mainsails and mizzens are never lowered, only the peak halyards being let go.

Beyond Groix the breeze freshened and the sun was gradually obscured by cloud. Our course was shaped south for Belle Ile, which was soon revealed to us, not mystic and mist-shrouded as Groix of

the widows and witches, but a dove grey, romantic and benign.

“Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky——”

Corentin quoted the Breton saying :

“Qui voit Ouessant voit son sang ;
 Qui voit Groix voit sa croix,
 Qui voit Belle Ile, voit son ile.”

As we approached, the colour of the land, which is bold, became of a darker hue, and soon we could compare the island to a sapphire. Never a moment's trouble had we with the engine, out here among the blue-water rollers of the long Atlantic swell. There is nothing on the dusty roads ashore to compare with the joy of motoring seaward in one's own staunch little craft to explore such a romantic island as Belle Ile, set out in the vast expanse of the great blue heaving Atlantic. First we picked up the rugged coast at the Pointe des Poulains. Here Sarah Bernhardt had her summer residence in a fort, a kind of restored martello tower or block house of a type common all round the coast, and instituted by Napoleon to enforce his famous “Continental System.” The Pointe des Poulains is a grand place for bass fishing, and some years before the war I saw the lighthouse-keeper land an eleven-pounder on a hand-line from the rocks. A confiding bluejacket in a disreputable water-side café at Lorient first told me of the Belle Ile bass, and at Sauzon (a village we were approaching) I was lucky to chance upon an ardent amateur angler, a blue-breeched customs

official. The good fellow delighted my heart with tales of bass. Together we set out for the Pointe des Poulains where Belle Ile tapers away into the Atlantic. Our gear in baskets and a huge tin of heads and entrails of sardines, together with rods, sadly hampered our movements, which were rendered more arduous by a pitiless sun. Not a scrap of shade was there, not a tree or blade of grass: a brown wilderness of scorched, slippery turf and iron rocks. For this very lack of trees it was that the divine Sarah chose Belle Ile for her summer residence, preferring its wild grandeur to the banal prettiness of mere woodland scenery. Down the inhospitable cliffs we slid. As soon as we reached the extreme point and regained our breath we put up our tackle. The play of the creamy surf that fringed the heaving turquoise sea afforded pleasant relief from the relentless beat of the sun on the cruel, brown rocks, cut into jagged fangs by centuries of savage gales. I used an 11-foot trout rod, far too whippy for the work. A huge bamboo, the more workmanlike tool of my companion, was spoilt by a ridiculously inadequate reel. With pardonable excitement I impaled (noisome job) the entrails of a sardine on my hook and cast it forth on to the waters. In the gully in which I had chosen to fish the surf was broken by a miniature cape of rocks, steep too and devoid of seaweed. The clear water plainly disclosed the shadowy forms of bass swimming slowly with a graceful motion like the rhythmic movements of a perfect dancer. My bait appeared neither to attract nor repel the



fish—they simply ignored it. I soon saw what was the matter : in the still translucent water was a long thin bar, my line, then a gap (the gut trace) and then the bait. My line, sold to me as a bass line, and very successful with pollack, was too coarse. So black and straight did it appear in the water that for very shame I reeled it up. Even coarser was the *douanier's* tackle, but deaf to my remonstrances and confident of ultimate success he toiled on all through the heat of the day, just reaching home in time to go on night duty, fishless but thoroughly happy. On the morrow I journeyed in a rickety springless cab to Le Palais, the capital of the island, along an apology for a road that had evidently not been repaired since it had been built by Lord Crawford, the Governor during the British occupation of the island in the Seven Years War. In a combined grog-shop, grocery store and ship chandler's, I unearthed a line, a weird stiff thing, very fine, of unknown material. Back to the Pointe des Poulains I went alone. The conditions were identical with my previous visit. At the third cast a whale—a leviathan he looked in the water—made off with the bait. Out ran the line ; I let run as long as I dared, then with considerable trepidation (for I had not tested my new line), I began to put on a slight check ; there was a moment of awful suspense, then the worst occurred—the new line snapped like pack-thread ! For three weeks I bullied the postmaster and the postman (he combined both offices) and patiently endured the worst of fare and rough quarters. When the

new line did arrive from London I caught some bass, none over six pounds, but game fish, several of which succeeded in sawing the trace on the razor edge of the rocks.

To return to our cruise. As we drew in towards the land I recognized many a rock and sandy cove rich in memories of summer seas and moonlight picnic parties. Here Sarah Bernhardt kept a boat on an out-haul, and I can yet see her directing seining operations with a wealth of gesture and throwing her long white gloves into the sea after handling some of the catch—grey mullet if I remember right.

Rounding Taillefer Point *Sylvabelle* carried us triumphantly between the twin piers into the outer harbour of old Le Palais. Here we let go in a convenient berth where we could lie afloat. It had been a delightful run across from Pont Aven, and at five o'clock we all went ashore, Corentin in search of petrol and the Viking to be shown the sights of this entrancing island. Le Palais is the capital of the island and has a distinct aspect of its own, different to the ports of the mainland. Beneath the walls of the ancient citadel a long fjord runs inland through the town, which is a place of ships and shipping, tall, Spanish-looking houses and English names. Belle Ile was occupied by British troops under Admiral Keppel and Lord Crawford from 1761 until its exchange for Arcadia or Nova Scotia two years later. Readers of Alexandre Dumas the elder will remember the death of Porthos in a cave at Locmaria.

The morning of August 30 showed a falling

glass and an ominous sun-rise. However, we decided to try it, being anxious to reach Pornic, a tidal harbour, just south of the estuary of the Loire, where I intended to make a halt in the voyage south in order to explore the islands of Noirmoutier and Yeu. After breakfast we got under way in a heavy shower of hail which accompanied a fierce south-easterly squall. We set a reefed mainsail to steady *Sylvabelle* across the bay on her way south towards Kerdonis Point. As we left the shelter of the island we began to feel the full force of the sea and heavy squalls. Black was the sky and the horizon obscured with rain. It was folly to think of proceeding across the long stretch of open Atlantic that separated Belle Ile from St. Gildas Point, the southern extremity of the Loire estuary, and our nearest landfall for Pornic. We put back to Le Palais in heavy rain, the wind increasing in force with great rapidity. The anchor was let go in our old berth, where we were soon joined by sardine smacks from Guilvinec and Concarneau with three reefs down. Very snug we felt in our tiny cabin as the wind whistled through the shrouds and the rain pelted down on deck. Through the port-holes we could see great tarred smacks sweeping madly round the breakwater into the harbour. Several of the new cutter-rigged craft had fitted roller reefing gear, a great innovation for the conservative Breton mariners. Like fishermen all over the world the Breton sardine men have scant regard for their neighbours, and let go anyhow and anywhere when they come into harbour. To avoid

sheering into these tarry monsters I sent Corentin ashore with a stern fast to the breakwater. Outside the wind rapidly increased until it was blowing a gale. More and more, and still more, sardine-boats crowded into the harbour from every port on the coast. A smack from Guilvinec carried away the fragile mast of a small motor launch with her bowsprit. This settled the matter so far as I was concerned, and I determined to seek the seclusion of the inner harbour before we were completely hemmed in by the mass of craft. At first we had a tussle to get our anchor, for an inconsiderate neighbour had let go right athwart our chain. After a good deal of heaving and hauling, and the exchange of much abuse in the Breton tongue, *Sylvabelle* was freed. Then Corentin went ashore in the dinghy and cast off the stern fast from the quay, what time I started up the engine. There was now quite a "run" in the harbour and smacks were still crowding in. Down would come their sodden canvas with a dull swish, a hand in clumsy oilskins would tumble over the anchor, no notice was taken of one's neighbours and no attempt made to round up in a seamanlike manner. Through this maze of craft it behoved me to pick a passage. Had she been caught between two of the massive smacks, poor, ladylike *Sylvabelle* would have been crushed like an egg-shell. With the engine just ticking over we went slowly ahead and threaded our way through the floating town of sardine smacks, past the steam-packet berth, up a narrow sea-lane into the inner harbour, where we took up a snug berth in a corner just outside the

lock gate leading to the inner basin. It was now noon and we were very hungry. There was no time to change if we wanted a seat at the crowded table d'hôte, so ashore we went in our sea boots and jerseys. At the little hotel on the quay we found the members of an English cinema company, but the serving wench had seen *Sylvabelle* return, and our seats of the previous evening were reserved. These island girls have an eye for a boat. What mainland waitress would have picked out our microscopic craft, and guessed that our morning outing would have sent us hotfoot to the hotel ordinary. It was a capital lunch, mostly fish, grilled sardines, lobster, and boiled pollack, which we washed down with some white wine from Nantes, for Belle Ile grows no cider.

We congratulated ourselves on having put back in time, and on our equally wise decision in shifting our berth, for the outer harbour was a mass of craft. Viewed from the first floor dining-room of the Hôtel de Bretagne the bare pole-masts of the luggers reminded me of the forest of lances in a picture by Velasquez in the Prado Gallery at Madrid called "The Siege of Breda." A wisp of smoke went up from every boat, denoting that sardine soup was under way. There is no galley, but a fire is lighted in the boats on a flat stone that also does duty as ballast, and the soup is brewed in a large gipsy pot. In some of the boats the crew had already dined and were asleep on the bottom boards, curled up in old army blankets like Arabs, while the blue nets were drying from the mast head—cornflowers tossed to the breeze.

Still boats came crowding into the harbour, their crews resembling yellow mannikins in their stiff, glistening oilskins. Men, boats and gear were obviously storm-tossed, and it was quite an interesting little study in psychology to watch the tired, set faces relax into smiles as sister smacks were recognized already in shelter. With evening the weather moderated considerably and we took a long walk up over the hill behind the citadel and Borstal settlement for boys. Here and there we met groups of fishermen from Finistère stretching their legs in a seamen's slouch ashore, discussing the island in raucous Breton.

On going aboard, after dinner at the hotel, we found a tunny-smack near us on the hard. She had come in leaking from a bad strain, and her crew were worn out with pumping. In spite of hard weather off the Spanish coast they had made a fair catch, but had nearly lost their ship getting home. Throughout the night the tap, tap, tap of the shipwrights' mallets getting her ready for sea once more was woven into our dreams of the haggard faces of the crew sweating at the pumps.

CHAPTER IV

A Blue Water Passage

ON the following morning I awoke at daylight and found to my joy that the glass having risen considerably during the night there was every prospect of getting to sea. The sardine fishers were of the same opinion, and left the harbour, at first rather timidly, one by one, and then in groups of twos and threes, until by the time breakfast was underway the harbour was empty of fishing craft. We decided to follow them, for if the sea was smooth enough to allow the fragile sardine nets to be shot, it was smooth enough for the good ship *Sylvabelle* to proceed upon her lawful occasions. At half-past eight, then, we motored out of the harbour and set the mainsail to help us along before a westerly breeze that had some weighty squalls on tap. We had a swift and uneventful run down the island coast ; but once out of the shelter of the land off Kerdonis Point we found a big sea running. Soon the squalls lightened and the sun shone out. This gave us courage, and I determined to carry on for Pornic and set a course S.E. for the Pilier Light, an islet off the entrance to the Loire estuary. Clear of the land, pipes were lighted and we

settled down in the cockpit to enjoy *Sylvabelle's* first rough passage in blue water. Not a moment's trouble was experienced with the Aster engine, which continued to turn with the greatest regularity; it might have been on the test bench, or the Grand Junction Canal, instead of scaling the blue, rolling downs of the Bay of Biscay. Several lobster-smacks were passed, standing on and off while their boats picked up the pots. For the most part the lobster-smacks were wholesome cutters, sturdy, yet easily handled by their expert crew. The bait question is ever a source of trouble and expense to the crustacean fishers. At many places they are obliged to import gurnards from La Rochelle, Arcachon and other steam-trawler ports. Many sea-birds of various common varieties were observed, and we passed through a school of porpoises playing about our keel like giant otters. Porpoises are the curse of the sardine fishery, for they play havoc with the nets in which they become entangled. The Government detail torpedo boats to deal with the porpoises, which sounds rather Gilbertian, though in reality it is practical enough, for not torpedoes but machine-gun and rifle bullets are fired at the porpoises. Some years ago rifles and carbines were issued to the fishermen, with a supply of ammunition for use against the porpoises, but the hot-headed Bretons used their weapons to settle personal disputes, and on one occasion at Concarneau, during a trade dispute between fishermen and packers, the rifles were used to repel the police and were finally withdrawn. Various

means of destroying the foe have been tried, such as foul-hooking and harpooning, and a reward is paid for the head of every porpoise brought to the office of the Inscription Maritime, but they seem to flourish in spite of official decrees.

As the morning proceeded a very ominous cloud appeared above the horizon, and at one time I began to regret my decision of carrying on south, but the squall passed away without disturbing us, though it left more weight in the wind. Running before the wind, the loose-footed mainsail was boomed out at the end of a hollow spar, once the boom of a racing dinghy. We proudly referred to it as the "spinnaker-boom," but pride soon had a fall, and the "spinnaker-boom" snapped in twain like a vulgar carrot before the ever-freshening breeze. The westerly wind settled down from squalls to a steady, healthy blow; blue sky above and blue sea below. Quite enough wind and sea to make matters interesting, but nothing alarming, and lunch was enjoyed by all hands in the cockpit. As we proceeded on our south-easterly course we felt the full weight of the west wind, and the long Atlantic rollers caused our big, cumbersome dinghy to charge down on us from a height. This dinghy was too big and heavy to be carried on deck, so perforce we had to tow it, though it was a heavy charge for *Sylvabelle* in a sea-way, and decided, there and then, to lay it up at Pornic and buy a smaller one to take with us on our voyage south.

No land was visible until the sharp eyes of Corentin sighted the Four Lighthouse and the

flat coast about Le Croisic. The sight of the Four set me thinking of Lord Hawke's famous blockade of this coast, for it was on November 20, 1759, that the *Essex* and the *Resolution* ran on the Four Reef and were set on fire by order of Lord Hawke. Near Le Croisic is a reef called to this day the "Basse du Soleil Royal" after the *Soleil Royal*, which stranded on it during the same engagement. Some years later, by order of Louis XV, one of the guns of the *Soleil Royal* was presented to the citizens of Le Croisic, who cast two bells for the church of "Our Lady of Pity." Tides, rocks, a hostile coast bristling with batteries, and no engines to help claw off a lee shore—the old wooden navy were seamen indeed!

In our case both ship and engine behaved magnificently, and we were able to give ourselves whole-heartedly to the grandeur of the scene—great blue rollers and sunshine. We enjoyed a sensation of freedom, such liberty as one never knows ashore; the freedom of the seas was ours. Soon we picked up La Banche Lighthouse, rising sheer from the sea, and the lighthouse-keeper came out on to his balcony and took a look at us through his glass. Next, the twin towers of Le Pilier were sighted, and we found ourselves among the sardine and mackerel boats of Le Croisic. The latter are whiffing with lines boomed out on "bobbing poles"; they are trim little half-decked, sloop-rigged, fishing boats, quite yacht-like, with white-painted topsides and sails of white, yellow, or a tan much lighter than that in favour with the fishers of the Morbihan or Finistère ports.

Then we pass a large cutter-rigged smack of admirable lines from Les Sables d'Olonne. She is hove to and her crew are towing a sardine net astern of their rowing-boat, the *patron*, erect in the stern sheets, is sowing the "rogue." An old tramp steamer passes us, flying "the red duster," bound into the Loire estuary, doubtless loaded with Welsh coal for St. Nazaire or Nantes. In former years one often enjoyed the sight of one of the famous Nantes full-rigged ships making her home port under a press of sail ; alas ! the shipping slump has laid up all these fine vessels in the Canal de la Martinière up the Loire. Nantes was famous for her sailing ships in former days, and they were often a sight to gladden the eyes of a sailor, waiting for orders at Queenstown or Falmouth, with a cargo of nitrate from Chili.

Le Pilier Island presents a queer appearance with the lighthouse towers side by side, one in disuse ; from afar, one has the impression of factory chimneys. The island is inhabited only by a semaphore signalman, two lighthouse-keepers and a multitude of skinny rabbits. Until the twelfth century Le Pilier was joined to the adjacent island of Noirmoutier by a causeway some three miles long.

A couple of miles off the island we spy three mackerel hookers from Douarnenez ; with masts and spars laid low they are anchored in the shelter of a rocky islet, an offshoot of Le Pilier. These Douarnenez boats use drift lines, and fish after a fashion of their own. At the end of May a lugger of the sardine type, manned with a crew of six or

seven and a boy, fits out with a couple of dozen light hand-lines, a sack of flour, a large tub, a mincing machine, new running gear, a cooking pot, and new blanket capes to sleep in. Southward she sails down the coast until she falls in with the northward-bound mackerel. A telegram is sent to the home port and down come a score of similar craft. These specialists catch six fish to the local boat's two, and the secret of the success lies in the fact that the fish are attracted round the boat, which is anchored (if the sea is not too deep) or allowed to drift, and surface bait thrown in. This surface bait consists of flour mixed with raw mackerel run through the mincing machine, resulting in a good stiff paste, which must be used liberally. As many lines as possible are fished, each member of the crew working at least two lines, and it is amusing to watch them hauling up mackerel hand over fist, each man with a knife between his teeth like a cinema villain. Operations are begun at dawn, and it is not unusual for a boat to land a thousand fish in the afternoon. Sometimes the boats work in groups, taking it in turn to sail ashore with the joint catch. Quite independent of the home port the fish are sold in the market nearest the fishing ground; nor is it uncommon for the boats to stay away from home all the summer, the hardy crew of tough Bretons sleeping on the bottom boards wrapped in their great blanket capes, with a sail rigged as an awning in inclement weather. It is a mode of fishing for young men, no capital outlay being required for nets and "rogue" as in the sardine fishery.

The crew are often all members of the same family. I am sorry to note, by the way, that the young generation of Breton fishermen are discarding the picturesque blue *beret* or tam-o'-shanter in favour of the universal peaked cap, just as their young sisters are favouring the creations of the milliner in preference to their pretty white caps.

From Le Pilier we set a course inland towards St. Gildas Point, the south extremity of the Loire estuary, passing a pilot boat on her way out. Pilots and their craft are always an interesting study. The pilot boats of the Loire are yawl-rigged with a microscopic mizzen—just big enough to keep them head to wind. The westerly wind freshened and we encountered a steep sea off the flat St. Gildas Point, for here the current of the Loire runs very strong. I was at the helm, the Viking being asleep, and Corentin below, shaving, for he was about to visit a new port; moreover Thursday is the day set aside for his mid-weekly shave, and Corentin is nothing if not methodical. A bolt from the blue descended on this scene of bliss as the dinghy went careering off on a cruise of its own. We lowered away the mainsail and picked up the boat under power. Running before the wind, we had left the engine-room ports open, and when I brought her up head to wind to chase the dinghy and lower the mainsail, we shipped a sea in the engine-room which luckily did no damage but taught us to keep the ports closed in a sea-way. The painter had not parted, but the eyebolt and mast thwart had carried away. As I have already mentioned, this dinghy was too

big for *Sylvabelle* to tow when making a passage, but it was very handy for fishing, being 13 feet overall with a good flat floor. We now stopped the engine altogether and ran under canvas until we got into smoother water. We were now at the entrance to the Bay of Bourgneuf, over the Kerouars Bank, noted for its soles. Ashore we could see the villas of Préfailles, a small watering-place. There is a great deal of fishing in the coves along the coast near Préfailles, and crabs and lobsters are plentiful at St. Gildas Point. This is a great temptation to the amateur who decides to keep a boat in the exposed cove of Préfailles, and, of course, loses her at the first onshore gale. Most seaside places have some odd longshore individual proverbial for his extensive local knowledge and original behaviour; Préfailles is no exception to the rule. There died last year as queer an old curmudgeon as ever hauled a boat up a beach. Old Emile, unlike most of the longshore fraternity, was a landed proprietor, and at one time had owned most of Préfailles. His vineyards produced the best wine for miles around, and if Emile liked the cut of your jib he would invite you into a barn where he kept his wine, and made you free of his casks. Although he could not swim a yard, in summer and winter, rain and shine, old Emile used to bathe off the beach. He was a clever fisherman and had many secret marks and poaching tricks. He would shoot a trammel across a cove and then tow a chain along the sand to dig out the soles and bolt them into the net. He was the uncrowned King

of Préfailles, of a type they no longer breed nor understand.

Being afraid of missing our tide into Pornic we started the engine again, and after ten minutes the dinghy's painter parted, and had to be replaced by a stout warp used to moor the kedge. Six miles along a pretty coast of sandy coves and rock-bound creeks brought us to the village of St. Marie, and the Noveillard, a bathing suburb of Pornic. All this dinghy-chasing had taken time, and we found the last of the ebb streaming out over the bar, beyond which lay a wilderness of sand and mud. As Pornic harbour dries right out every tide, there is a stone pier outside at the Noveillard, for the use of the steamer which runs in summer, twice daily, across the Bay of Bourgneuf to the Island of Noirmoutier. We now let go under the lee of this pier, which proved rather a broken reed, as the seas swept right over it, drenching the sea-sick passengers who attempted to land from the little steamer. We stuck it out until the evening, when we moved into the harbour and took up a berth beneath the ivy-clad walls of the grand old castle, once the seaside residence of Bluebeard.

CHAPTER V

Cruising and Fishing at Pornic

MY first business on arrival at Pornic was to look for a smaller dinghy. Finding nothing suitable for my purpose, I ordered one to fit over the cabin-top from Monsieur Rondet of Nantes. While this dinghy was being built we decided to spend the time fishing and exploring the Loire estuary and adjacent islands of Noirmoutier and Yeu.

Pornic is the first harbour south of the Loire. From an administrative point of view it forms part of the department of the Loire Inferieure, and is thus in Brittany, though the inhabitants have little in common with the Bretons, who, from an ethnological point of view, cease at the River Loire. The district is commonly called the Pays de Retz. Gilles de Retz, who was a Marshal of France in the early fifteenth century, was the original Bluebeard, and owner of Pornic Castle. In 1440 so scandalous was his evil behaviour that he was imprisoned in Nantes Castle and tried by an ecclesiastical court. Found guilty of heresy, debauchery, apostasy, idolatry and communion with the Devil, he was excommunicated and burnt at the stake on the site of the present hospital

of Nantes. A chapel was built on the spot where the ogre was executed and became the resort of women desirous of presenting their husbands with a baby, to which end they burnt candles before a statue of the Virgin. It is interesting to note that Gilles de Retz, who inspired Perrault's fairy tale of Bluebeard, was, at one time, the standard-bearer of Joan of Arc, who was also burnt at the stake by order of an ecclesiastical court. In addition to this tradition of Bluebeard, Pornic possesses a golf-links, and vineyards producing a pleasant little light red wine called *rougé*. The harbour dries right out, but is innocent of that evil-smelling mud which is such an unpleasant feature of most tidal harbours on the Continent. Nantes yachtsmen are very fond of Pornic, as it is easily accessible by rail, and in consequence handy for week-end sailing, though one rarely finds more than 13 feet of water at low water (neaps). Forty or fifty years ago Pornic was much in favour with painters and men of letters, among whom was the poet Browning. At low tide the red and ochre sails of the trawlers aground on the golden sands at the harbour mouth are very "southern" in the summer sunlight, and almost recall certain aspects of Cette or the mouths of the Rhône about Martigues. The place is eminently paintable, although lacking the quaint costumes of Brittany. In the inner harbour, at the head of the pretty wooded estuary, one finds some interesting specimens of marine bric-à-brac such as delight the eye of the collector of nautical novelties. Besides some wholesome cutter-rigged

trawlers one often sees the old luggers of the Vendée coast of the Bay of Bourgneuf. Veritable scarecrows of the sea, with tipsy topsails set above multi-patched lugs, some of these tarred, box-like hulls were launched before the great Napoleon set foot on St. Helena.

One of the great attractions of Pornic is the vast trawling ground, the haunt of soles and rays, provided by the shallow, sandy Bay of Bourgneuf. Eight miles across this bay, and forming a natural breakwater, lies the island of Noirmoutier, in reality only an island at high water, as vehicles can be driven across a stone causeway at low tide at a point where the Vendée coast is but three miles distant. Beyond Noirmoutier, sixteen miles out in the Bay of Biscay, lies the interesting and picturesque island of Yeu.

To sum up the cruising features of Pornic: you have on sailing out of the harbour on the starboard hand—Préfailles and St. Gildas Point, beyond which is the estuary of the Loire, and on its further bank, St. Nazaire, Le Pouliguen, and Le Croisic; right ahead you have the islands of Noirmoutier, Le Pilier and Yeu; on the port hand, the Bay of Bourgneuf, the marshes of La Vendée and the Goulet of Fromentine, through which, at high water (springs), one may pass out on to the Bay of Biscay between Noirmoutier and the mainland, though at neaps there is not sufficient water over the causeway for any but craft of the lightest draft.

Corentin took advantage of our stay at Pornic to fit some of those minor "gadgets" which are found to be wanting on a new craft; he also put on a couple of coats of paint. While this was in progress I shipped aboard a local fishing-boat, a smart cutter, the *Eon Mor*, an ex-yacht from Brest, 24 feet overall. Her owner and I were old shipmates, for we had carried to a successful end many fishing expeditions in former years. "Old Joe," as I will call him, though that is not the name he generally goes by, is an adept at prawn-fishing, having methods and grounds of his own.

Five o'clock is just striking from Pornic Church as, in the clammy grey of early morning, we cast off from the Touring Club pontoon and man the sweeps down the little estuary. It is almost high tide, and on the quay, as we draw slowly past, the inevitable dip-net, or *carrelet* fisher, is unpacking his net full of hope of that record bag of grey mullet which should reward the early riser. A sleepy customs official stretches himself under his cloak, longing for his relief and cup of coffee. Aboard the trawlers moored to the quay, a rattling of chains and stamping of *sabots* tells us that they will soon be following us to sea. Abreast of Bluebeard's ivy-clad castle, the rain, which has been threatening since dawn, comes down in earnest, and continues until we are clear of the harbour. Finding a timid westerly breeze awaiting us out in the bay, we lay in the sweeps, and setting the topsail lay a course south-east down into the bight of the Bay of Bourgneuf. The skipper of a

passing sloop loaded with salt and potatoes from Noirmoutier Island prophesies a fine day, and five minutes later a half-hearted sun peeps out from the rain-clouds in proof of his statement. The wind, which is a fair one for us, freshens, enabling us to tow our heavy punt against the tide, which is beginning to ebb out of the bay. By half-past six we pick up one of our marks, the windmill by La Bernerie church steeple, and let go the anchor. The boy Louis tumbles into the punt and begins to bait the hoop nets with strings of small crabs which he has been busy threading on the way out. By the time the thermos has been emptied of coffee, our rock, Champezière, has raised his mussel-crowned head above the brown sea and we push off in the punt. Old Joe sculls with an oar over the stern while Louis bales with a battered saucepan. Although the wind is light, quite a surf is beating against the rock, drenching us in spray, which is soon dried by the kindly sun. One after the other Old Joe casts over the hoop nets in a strategic semicircle round the slack-water side of the rock. Anxiously I watch the buoys bobbing up and down, and my imagination depicts a vast horde of colossal prawns breakfasting greedily on our strings of defunct crabs. After five minutes the temptation is too strong for our patience, and sculling down to the first buoy Old Joe grabs the line and hauls up the net, and half a dozen fine prawns are hopping about in the stern sheets, their red eyes gleaming like electric globes in the shadow under the thwart. These luminous prawns appear to be a different species

to those found alongshore. The prawns keep moving round the rock, as the current changes with the tide, but twenty years' experience has taught Old Joe where to set his nets, and we follow our quarry round the rock. At low water there is a lull; the prawns only seem to feed when the tide is running. We land on slime-covered Champezière and collect a bucket full of mussels, and chip off a dozen fat oysters with a marline-spike. Then, when the tide begins to flow, we resume operations against the prawns, and fish on until the rock is awash, when the water becomes too deep for our buoy lines. We estimate that we have over eight pounds of fine prawns, running about eighty to the pound, in addition to a small lobster and a torpedo ray. There are large quantities of these electric rays (*torpedo nobiliana*) in Bourgneuf Bay; a specimen of a couple of pounds will numb the arm to the elbow—a practical joke often played on summer visitors from Paris by the local fishermen. We go aboard and lunch, for we are furiously hungry and thirsty, and I, for one, have a kink in my back, from hauling up the nets.

In addition to several trawling expeditions in *Eon Mor* we visited the islands of Noirmoutier and Yeu. Like Captain Cook we became circumnavigators—not of the Globe, but of Noirmoutier. We decided to sail out round the northern point of Noirmoutier, then south-west to Yeu and return to Pornic via the Fromentine channel at the east end of Noirmoutier.

Early one morning we set sail in the *Eon Mor*. A swift tide and fresh north-west wind soon carried us out to the Pilier. This was too good to last, however, and just when we needed a sailing breeze to navigate an intricate channel between the end of Noirmoutier and the Pilier we found ourselves becalmed. I regretted that I had not come in *Sylvabelle* instead of this wind-jammer. Sounding with the boat-hook disclosed the fact that, as we had feared, there was very little water left over the rocks. Afraid of the fierce tide sweeping us ashore, we decided to work round the Pilier. Up went the topsail, the sweeps were manned, and along we trailed on the last of the ebb.

At this northern extremity is situated the chief fishing port of Noirmoutier Island—L'Herbaudière, which dries out and is crowded with sardine-craft attracted by a couple of canning factories. The best anchorage at Noirmoutier is the charming sandy bay at the Bois de la Chaize, surrounded by pretty woods right down to the shore. On landing at the wooden pier one is at once within the forest, a mass of golden mimosa. There are two hotels: one on the shore, the other in the forest. A couple of miles in a donkey-cart bring one to the capital, Noirmoutier village, connected with the sea by a narrow channel two miles long. This little port is used by coasters in search of salt and potatoes—this, with the breeding of donkeys and fishing, being the staple industries of the island. A great part of Noirmoutier is given over to salt-pans, and the white

pyramids of salt vie with the windmills in relieving the monotony of the landscape. Apart from the woods at the Bois de la Chaize, the island, twelve miles long but very narrow, consists of sand dunes and the aforementioned salt marshes. Possibly the number of windmills is due to the fact that the island was captured for the Dutch by Van Tromp in 1676. There is a quaint castle with pepper-caster towers, and the picturesque church of St. Philibert contains an interesting Romance Crypt. St. Philibert was buried in this crypt, but when the Normans raided the island in 835 the monks carried off the body of the saint to the shores of the Lake of Grandlieu on the mainland, a famous water for pike-fishing and wild-fowling. So mild is the climate that quite a winter colony is to be found at the Bois de la Chaize.

The island of Le Pilier, off which we are now becalmed, is inhabited only by a semaphore signalman, two lighthouse-keepers, and a multitude of skinny rabbits. Until the twelfth century Le Pilier was joined to Noirmoutier by a causeway; there are two light towers, one in disuse. During the late war an anti-submarine battery was stationed on the island. The fine rocks surrounding the Pilier are famed for lobsters, bass, and red mullet. I took advantage of the calm to strip and dive deep down into the delicious green water in search of an appetite for the sumptuous lunch that Louis was preparing. At three o'clock the wind came away from the south, gradually working round to the west. We passed the tower

marking the Bœufs, sighted a shoal of porpoises, a full-rigged ship, and several steamers coming out of the Loire, and by 6 p.m. had lost sight of the land. Half an hour later we sighted the Island of Yeu, the landfall being duly toasted, I was very glad to save daylight, not that there is any difficulty about approaching the Island of Yeu, but because I wished to see the island develop before my eyes as we sailed up to it. There is, to my mind, a romantic fascination in making new land, especially when that land is an island situated in the open waters of the Atlantic. We puffed our pipes and meditated in silence, while the long, dark emerald before us developed slowly into an island set in a dark blue sea, studded with spires, towers and houses. Soon one could distinguish the lighthouse, the Citadel in a clump of trees, and St. Saviour's spire. At 8 p.m. we rounded the breakwater, and entered the harbour of Port Joinville, formerly called Port Breton. It was three-quarter ebb. Proceeding into the inner harbour we let go and rigged the legs preparatory to taking the mud. The harbour was packed with fishing-craft, for in addition to the local cutter-rigged sardine-boats and tunny-smacks, a fleet of mackerel hookers had come down from Douarnenez and Guilvinec. Very picturesque were the crews of the latter, sitting round their cooking-pots of fish soup, their coloured overalls and the black hulls of their craft toned into a mass of sombre colour by the glow of the setting sun. Having made all snug for the night we left the boy on board to sleep in the tiny cuddy under the fore-

deck. A boy put us ashore in a passing punt and soon we were discussing an excellent dinner at the Hôtel des Voyageurs in the company of half a dozen commercial travellers and minor government officials. I smoked a last pipe outside the clean little hotel on the clean little quay lined with whitewashed houses and thronged with fisherfolk. Boys and girls were strolling up and down after the day's work; the latter wore black kerchiefs folded over their heads and dainty little high-heeled Louis-Quinze wooden shoes, copied from the girls of Les Sables d'Olonne on the mainland.

My bedroom overlooked the harbour, and at 4 a.m. I was awakened by the hideous siren of the steamer getting under way for Fromentine, and the oaths and anchor-chains of the Breton mackerel-luggers. At six, I was re-awakened by more oaths and anchor-chains as the local sardine-smacks put to sea. Having breakfasted, explored, and photographed the town, I went out on foot at nine under a scorching sun to discover the wonders of the island, La Côte Sauvage and the old Castle. This granite island belongs to the Department of La Vendée, and contains a population of 3,985 souls; it is some six miles in length, by two and a half across, with a coastline of twenty miles. A small steamer makes the sixteen-mile passage to Fromentine daily. Of the early history of the island but little is known. Dolmens and menhirs show that it was inhabited in the Neolithic Age, and two monasteries were built in the sixth and eleventh centuries. Oia, as the island was then

called, was raided in turn by Saracens, Normans, Spaniards and English. In 1360 the Treaty of Brittany gave it to Robert Knollys, a leader of one of the free-companies, a sort of pirate king who carried on a reign of terror, of pillage and of rape from the castle I was on my way to visit. In 1795 the Comte d'Artois, escorted by the British Fleet, used the island as a base for operations with Charette, which never materialized. Fishing is the chief industry of the island, though a few of the farmers tend vines and breed sheep and ponies; kelp-burning is also carried on. A good many Bretons live on the island, attracted by the sardine factories, though the natives speak a Poitevin dialect. These facts I read in a local guide-book, sitting under a fig-tree above the town. The way had led me up a narrow high street of dazzling white houses, red-roofed and one-storeyed. In the streets were a few fishermen and women with the black kerchiefs on their heads that I had remarked overnight. Rather a dark, Spanish-looking race I found them—in fact the whole aspect of the place is Spanish or rather Basque. Leaving the shade of my fig-tree, I marched bravely along in the sun, clad only in a shirt and dungaree nether garments. Past the church and cemetery, out on to an open plain of market-gardens and cornfields, half an hour took me to a tiny white-walled hamlet, and on to open pasture land strewn with granite boulders and menhirs, among which browsed goats and sheep. Near a red-roofed farm stood a few small island-bred ponies and cows. On the left was the pic-

turesque spire of St. Saviour's Church, and on the right the tall lighthouse. The land now sloped westward towards the blue Atlantic. Brilliant, exotic butterflies, amongst which I recognized orange tips and various fritillaries, flitted about me. Down from the cloudless heavens beat the relentless sun; my kodak weighed a ton, and the road, at first a passable turnpike, had degenerated into a boulder-strewn bridle-path. I sighted a quaint tower ahead, and at last, after descending into, and climbing out of, a pretty little valley leading to a sandy beach, I scaled a down covered with boulders and discovered a ruin. It was a battered lichen-clad castle lifted right out of some mediæval fairy tale of dragons and golden-haired princesses, and set on a sea-girt rock beneath the summer sea. Never in the course of many wanderings up and down the highways and byways of Europe has it been my good fortune to set eyes on such a romantic castle, unless it be at Paris at the Odéon Theatre, when they give Maeterlinck's *Pelleas et Melisande*.

The present castle was built on the ruins of a former château in 1327 by Oliver de Clisson, the father of the great Constable, who completed it in 1396. It bears some resemblance to the beautiful Château de Clisson on the mainland near Nantes, the home of the great de Clissons. In 1551 the Castle of Yeu was mentioned in dispatches by Henry II of France as being the only part of the island that held out against the English and Spaniards. It was dismantled

about 1699 at a time when Louis XIV demolished all the coast defences he was unable to garrison.

The castle is entered by a modern drawbridge from the main island. This drawbridge is defended by a few ruined earthworks, among which I came upon a charming Arcadian picture. A tiny shepherdess was watching a few black sheep, lying full length on the dry turf gazing out to the blue Atlantic, her little bare toes twinkling in the sunshine. I passed over the bridge under an archway into the castle, peopled with little green lizards and such pictures of the past as one's imagination may paint. Norman pirates, swash-buckling knights, buccaneers, Knollys and his merry men draining butts of sack and carrying off shepherdesses.

It is low tide and my imagination fired by the sun and the romantic scene, I could almost perceive in the golden fronds of seaweed the flowing tresses of mermaids basking at the entrance of the sea caves. Beneath the cliffs I climbed down among the vast rocks where only wild pigeons break the solitude, and stripping off my clothes, plunged into the glorious surf. Then I strolled back past a frog-pond on the downs to Port Joinville and a well-earned lunch. After a short digestive nap I set out once more on my wanderings.

This time a similar road led me further south to a fishing hamlet called La Meule. It is a charming little village of white cottages and cowsheds

situated on a tiny western fjord with grand cliffs and rocks. Above the settlement stands the picturesque chapel of Notre Dame de la Meule, visited by mariners in fulfilment of vows made in time of stress at sea. There is a tradition and ceremony about the fulfilment of these vows requiring the crew to walk bare-footed in shirt and trousers (in the Middle Ages the trousers were dispensed with). They must be bare-headed, of course, and each carries a lighted candle. A few lobster-smacks use the little port, which is open to western gales. In bad weather the boats are hauled out high and dry. I tramped along the cliffs back to my fairy castle, succumbing on the way to the temptation of another bathe in the cool clear water of a beautiful cove. When I had dived many times, and played at seals and cormorants, I dried myself in the still hot sun and went on my way refreshed. Then I climbed all over the castle again, and wandered about the cliffs, enchanted by the beauty and romance of this wondrous isle.

Back to dinner at seven, the harbour full of fishing craft from twenty ports between Brest and La Rochelle. Crowds thronged the quays where joyous men and maidens sang late into the summer night. From jottings in my notebook of conversations with various natives, I see that during the Great War German civilian prisoners were interned in Port Joinville citadel and a spy arrested on the steamer. Twenty-eight of the island boats were sunk

by submarines. Cinema artists playing in the old castle shocked the natives. There was a seaplane base on the island during the Great War. The local fishermen are very jealous of the Bretons, who came down for the mackerel-hooking. In May, flights of pigeons from Africa visit the island. Bass are caught from the rocks at the back of the island up to sixteen pounds.

Seven of the following morning saw us under way. It was high water, the westerly wind was very light. Drawing out between the breakwaters and down the harbour of refuge we were soon out among the Douarnenez smacks, where seven or eight men were hauling mackerel for dear life. We paid out a line astern, baited with the stem of a clay pipe ; Old Joe had not much confidence in this bait, and announced his intention of eating raw any fish caught on it. It was thus with intense satisfaction that the boy hauled in a particularly fine mackerel. Old Joe was let off his bet on condition he stood drinks round on the next opportunity. Mackerel, when biting freely, will take any bright object moving through the water, and I have frequently caught them on this pipe-stem bait in the Channel, also on a piece of white calico, while the seaside ironmonger adorns his window with a species of large white " fly." This was the only event of a calm, almost windless passage. It was now eleven o'clock and we were off the mainland coast, looking out for the first of a series of five red buoys to lead us clear of the Braillard bank into the Goulet de Fromentine,

which is marked by two beacons. We picked up the first buoy but could see no signs of the second one, and stranded on the very sand bank we were trying to avoid, but managed to flounder off again into deep water. With the aid of my pre-war Zeiss I finally picked up the line of buoys close to the Noirmoutier shore. Soon we were being swept along on the swift young flood into Fromentine entrance, on either side of which were miles of golden sand dunes, the haunt of innumerable rabbits. Along the Vendée shore stretched miles of shady pine trees. It was a very pretty spot, sunshine, blue sky and golden sands recalling the mouth of the Guadalquivir. Summer visitors in multi-coloured garments were paddling about with shrimping nets, a few boats were trawling for prawns, while further in a group of blue-clad fishermen were hauling a seine for mullet. A wooden pier jutted out on either hand. Alongside that of Fromentine, on the mainland, lay the Yeu Island steamer, while at La Fosse pier on Noirmoutier Island a tiny wooden ferry steamer was blowing off steam. We now took the ground on a sandbank, off La Fosse, to wait for sufficient water to take us over the Goua causeway. Looking round one appeared to be in a vast inland lagoon, all sand and sunshine, the low marshy shore distorted by mirage. The flat sandy coast of the Vendée is often beset with these mirage effects, showing trees twice their height, church spires in the sky, etc. The mirage, which only occurs at low tide, is caused by the sun shining on the wet sand or shallow salt marshes

and causing a mirror effect. On a minor scale it is the same phenomenon as that which occurs in the South Sea Islands, where the lagoons in the middle of the islands reflect the island, which is seen from a great distance floating in the sky. The atmosphere has to be hot and dry, and the mirage generally occurs at the beginning of and during a spell of fine weather.

So hot was the sun that I stripped and jumped overboard, wading out up stream against a fierce tide and floating back with it to the boat. We lunched while waiting for the tide; various gulls, curlews, whimbrels, plovers and a heron or two kept us company, together with a few mussel-boats. At last the tide rose and we were swept along towards the three towers of the causeway. These towers have ladders leading to a platform with a seat to harbour pedestrians caught by the tide while crossing over. Once a merry-go-round was caught going to Noirmoutier Fair, and wooden horses and pigs were washed ashore at La Bernerie, to the delight of the children playing on the beach. The causeway forms a kind of watershed; the tide flowing into Bourgneuf Bay between the Pilier Island and St. Gildas Point meets the tide flowing in through the Goulet de Fromentine. The sand banks on the Fromentine side are higher than the causeway, while those on the Pornic side are lower. We crossed the road, striking it with the boat-hook. In one of the refuge towers I saw a spade and road-making material, for repairs are carried out at each low

tide. We were now back in Bourgneuf Bay and moored up at Pornic quay, well pleased with our "stick and string" cruise to Yeu Island.



PORT JOINVILLE AT LOW TIDE.



THE CASTLE OF YEU ISLAND.

CHAPTER VI

Bound South

THE new dinghy having arrived from Nantes, our departure was fixed for October 5. On the evening tide of the 4th, the weather, which had been light and foggy, came in wet, with a fresh, westerly breeze, but the glass remained steady, and the rain stopped by the morning. I decided, therefore, to carry out my original plan and leave at dead low water, so as to carry a favourable tide south-west across the shallow Bay of Bourgneuf and out to the open Atlantic by the Goulet de Fromentine. At 1 p.m. we got under way, with the dinghy lashed on deck. There was a fresh westerly breeze and a bit of a "lop" where the last of the ebb met the wind. Clear was the horizon and the sky blue, so that I did not anticipate any trouble. Our course led along the north coast of Noirmoutier to the Passage de Goua, where the causeway leads from the mainland of the Vendée coast across to the island. As we proceeded I began to regret our snug anchorage at Pornic. The wind freshened with every indication of worse to follow. Down at the Goua the swift tide, strong westerly wind and shallow water, raised a nasty sea, and I considered

that the surf on the Fromentine Bar and Braillard Bank would be too dangerous to risk, so we put back to Pornic. We now had tide and wind against us, and a nasty, short, steep sea, but *Sylvabelle* set her teeth and brought us back in triumph.

On Saturday, October 7, a fresh start was made so soon as we were afloat at 3.30 on the afternoon tide. The weather conditions were ideal, the glass was high, the tide in our favour, and there was just sufficient of a north-easterly breeze to make it worth while setting the mainsail. This time we passed quietly over the Goua causeway. So fine was the weather and so good our progress that I went back on my original plan of passing the night at Fosse, on the Noirmoutier side of the Fromentine Channel, and determined to carry on south to Les Sables d'Olonne. By 5.30 a terrific tide was sluicing out with us through the narrow Fromentine bottle-neck. At a record pace we swept past the anchored fishing-boats out on to the open Atlantic, where we picked up the buoyed channel which leads round clear of the Braillard Bank. A course was set south-east along the low wooded shore of St. Jean de Monts. Seaward the Ile d'Yeu lay a distant cloud on the horizon. Soon it grew dark, and out came a beam of light from the island lighthouse to guide us on our way. After a time we opened up the light of St. Gilles Croix de Vie, a fishing creek among the dunes. It was very dark, and I was thankful that Saturday night would keep the fishing smacks snug in the harbour. On the

starboard hand the Rochebonne light became visible, and right ahead, the Barges light off Les Sables d'Olonne. But a more powerful light than any now appeared as the moon sailed up to guide us. Seldom have I enjoyed anything so much as that night sailing down the Vendée coast, the dunes shining silver in the moonlight, the little vessel heeling to the freshening off-shore breeze, and the faithful engine turning over with clock-like regularity. The Barges light was circumnavigated and the Lesser Barges given a good berth before we luffed up for Les Sables d'Olonne breakwater. Here the moon enabled us to take up a snug berth off the *plage*, under the lee of the breakwater, for the tide was dead low, and it was impossible to enter the harbour. Bathed in moonlight the sleeping town on the sandy bay was a sight not easily forgotten. By midnight supper was eaten and I fell asleep to the music of the sea sighing on the sands of Les Sables d'Olonne.

In brilliant sunshine and a bitter north-east wind, we pulled ashore in the dinghy—up a narrow channel between twin breakwaters, which lead past a square lighthouse called Arundel's Tower, to a vast tidal harbour where were fishing craft innumerable, of a fine type and very smart in bright-coloured paint. Here the luggers of old have entirely disappeared before the modern cutter, and quite a few boats are fitted with motors. Corentin tied up the dinghy and went off in search of petrol, while I piloted the Viking round the town. It was Sunday morning, and

the Sablaises were looking their best in snowy caps and skirts to the knee, the most fascinating peasant dress in France. Of Iberian origin are the natives of Les Sables d'Olonne, the ladies' eyes being as black as the stockings they display so generously. Its position half-way between the islands of Ré and Yeu makes Les Sables a useful port for the yachtsman cruising on the Biscay coast. Its geographical situation within reach of the Rochebonne for trawling, the Atlantic tunny fishery outside a line drawn from Ushant to Cape Finisterre, the longshore sardine fishery, a vast, though tidal harbour, railway connection through to Central France, make Les Sables a handy fishing port. There are no steam trawlers fishing from Les Sables, and, as the harbour is situated at the head of a long narrow channel between two piers, the marine motor has a large future. The larger smacks have no room to tack up against a headwind and foul tide, and are towed up by manpower, or rather woman-power, for wives, daughters and sweethearts lay hold of the warp and haul their craft up to her berth. No wonder that, in spite of a certain amount of opposition on the part of the aged, most of the fishermen are keen advocates of the marine motor. Many of the boats are auxiliaries, the engine being installed as an auxiliary to the sails, the original sail-plan remaining intact. There are, however, a few power-boats used exclusively for the sardine fishery; these craft are not fishermen-owned, but fitted out by the canning factories. The auxiliaries range in size from open boats to ocean-

going trawlers. Among the makes of engine I noticed Aster, Ballot, Baudouin, Bettus, Couach, etc. The fishermen—there are about 2,000 of them—seem more intelligent than usual; a hand on a smack manages to earn about 14,000 francs per annum. They are clean, well-set-up fellows, and keep their boats remarkably well; paint, gear, and canvas are better cared for than in Brittany, where a great deal of cash still goes into the grog-shops that would be better spent on new gear. The Sablais are not native to the Vendée, but of a marked Basque or Spanish type. The women are very handsome and well versed in the fishmonger's art, selling and buying fish, packing fish in the canning works up and down the "bay" coast, and digging shell-fish. Their charming costume of skirts to the knees and high-heeled wooden shoes is due to their activity in the fish trade. They are, I repeat, quite Southern in character, and to see them dancing at one of their Sunday balls, in their white caps, short skirts and high-heeled wooden shoes, is not the least charm of Les Sables.

On the opposite bank, at the fishing suburb of La Chaume, are a few sardine factories and Arundel's Tower, of unknown origin. At the head of the channel is the main harbour, a kind of tidal lagoon, where the fishing-smacks take the ground at low water; inland of this is a large basin entered through a lock gate, where three colliers—British, Dutch, and Norwegian—are discharging Welsh coal. Along the quays we pass

the usual grog-shops and marine stores ; moored in tiers in the middle of the harbour are the trawlers, while the smaller craft lie alongside the quays.

The Sablais have evolved a very handsome type of craft, fast, seaworthy and pleasing to the eye, with a very liberal sail plan. The builders' yards of Les Sables are justly famous. Continuing our walk past a row of motor sardine-boats of the Arcachon pinnace type, we traverse the head of the harbour near the railway station, tempted by the sight of a number of craft on the slips opposite. Here are the yards ; and we find them all fully occupied, a scene of great activity. As I have just remarked, the Sablais yards are celebrated up and down the coast of the Bay from Brest to Spain.

The fair north-east wind was too good to lose, so after making some purchases for lunch we returned aboard, and ten o'clock saw Les Sables d'Olonne fading white into a background of blue sky and golden sands. We scudded along the flat Vendée coast before a fresh breeze, past sand dunes, pine woods, and a picturesque ruined church. This is the Benedictine Abbey of St. Jean d'Orbestiers, founded by one of the Dukes of Aquitaine in 1107. Not content with being a charming piece of decoration on an otherwise monotonous coast of dunes and pine plantations, St. Jean d'Orbestiers provides a useful mark for the guidance of mariners. Soon the flat island of Ré hove in sight on the starboard bow as we entered a strait between that island and the main-

land, called the Pertuis Breton. The mainland coast is very flat and we soon lost it in the haze. It is a kind of "no-man's land" of mussel beds tailing off into marshes, miles and miles of sand, mud and saltings, the happy hunting ground of shrimpers and shell-fish pickers. The mussel beds are one of the chief resources of the district and occupy a number of marshmen in little craft, half-punt, half mud-patten. In a yellow bay of mud the Sèvre Niortaise, sister stream to the Sèvre Nantaise, meets the sea. It is more or less navigable for "ditch crawlers" up to Niort, the capital of the Department of Les Deux Sèvres. Niort is a rich agricultural centre, and its feudal castle was built in part by Richard the Lion-Hearted, while a plaque at the Café du Globe commemorates the last days spent in France by Napoleon before going aboard the *Bellerophon*. The Sèvre Niortaise drains the Fens of Poitou, a district little known even to Frenchmen. I have spent delightful hours gliding about the narrow waterways in a little punt with a shovel-like paddle. There are several thousands of these punts on the marshes; in them the cattle are conveyed along the tiny canals from one pasture to another; in them the marshman is taken to church to be baptized and later married; in them his last remains are carried to the burial-ground. Than the marsh itself nothing is more beautiful; in reality it is a network of canals running through a flooded forest of poplars. It realizes, in miniature, the popular conception of the banks of the Amazon. In the remotest parts

of the fens, where the water lanes are most intricate and the poplars thickest, there dwell in little reed huts ancient folk who earn their daily bread by catching eels, frogs and leeches for the Paris market. But for the splash of the paddles and the cry of a bird the silence is complete as one glides down the lily-clad canal after a visit to one of these old eel-trappers.

I had intended to spend the night at the Ile de Ré to visit the citadel, which resisted the attacks of Buckingham in 1628 and was reconstructed by Vauban in the reign of Louis XIV. But this breeze off the land would make St. Martin a lee shore, and there is a strong current off the mouth of the harbour. So we carry on to La Pallice and console ourselves with reading about the island, its penal settlement, salt, and sour wine in the guide-book. The run was uneventful ; being Sunday there were but few fishing craft at sea, though we were overhauled by a steam trawler bound up to La Rochelle. For one night it was worth while entering the inner harbour, though La Pallice has quite a run at times. The tide sweeps across the harbour mouth, which should be approached with care. We tied up to a large mooring buoy a little way off the end of the railway stage, where the tenders land passengers from the liners.

In 1628 Cardinal Richelieu, at the siege of La Rochelle, built a wall right across the harbour to prevent supply ships from England reaching the beleaguered Protestants. This wall was so effec-

tive that it has completely ruined La Rochelle as a deep water harbour to this day. In order to retain and, if possible, increase her overseas trade, La Rochelle has constructed an entirely new harbour a few miles distant, at La Pallice. This is a magnificent work, but for some reason or other has failed to attract the big Transatlantic liners, and is used only by a Belgian line and the Pacific Steam Navigation Co. A sad sight was this harbour without ships, and we took the tram up to La Rochelle, where an afternoon was spent admiring the ancient towers at the harbour entrance and wandering along the quaint arcaded streets. Modern La Rochelle is a kind of French Grimsby on a small scale ; being a trawler port supplying Central France and Switzerland with fresh fish. Down at La Pallice were three cod schooners of Cancale, back from the Great Banks. They use this empty deep-water harbour to lay up in the off season ; after selling their catch at Bordeaux, their crews came ashore in dories and got very drunk. The howls on the quay near by and a short roll set up by a ground swell rendered our night at La Pallice far from comfortable, so that we were all three delighted to get under way once more. At first we had trouble with some petrol bought at Les Sables d'Olonne, but after changing the jet the carburetter was induced to accept this inferior brand. It was a grand morning, the sea quite calm with the lightest of north-east airs ; overhead blue sky and hot sun. This was just the weather I had been hoping for to enable us to undertake the difficult navigation

of the long, intricate channel between the Island of Oleron and the mainland, which finishes in the ill-famed Bar of Maumusson. I confess that I had been feeling uneasy at tackling this bar so late in the year, but to-day the conditions were ideal.

By this time Corentin had washed up the breakfast utensils and we sighted the long, low Island of Oleron and inshore of it the Island of Aix, where much history has been made. It was first fortified by Colbert when Louis XIV created the naval port of Rochefort in 1664.

Captured by a landing-party in 1757, Aix was the scene of the great fireship episode of April 11, 1809, when four French ships were destroyed by Lord Cochrane. Finally in 1815¹ the little island was the scene of Napoleon's surrender. The great Corsican landed on the island on July 7, and stayed until the 15th, in the vain hope of escaping to America. The presence of the *Bellerophon* in Aix roads made flight impossible and Napoleon was reluctantly compelled to give himself up to Captain Maitland.

In striking contrast to the other islands of the Biscay coast Oleron is almost park-like in the beauty of the woods that fringe the glorious acres of golden sands. Oleron is the second island of France, Corsica being the biggest. Oleron is of the Mediterranean rather than the Atlantic, and one cannot fail to admire the last resting-place of Pierre Loti. Conrad and Loti stand alone as great writers who have followed the

sea as a profession, Clarke Russell and Marryat being in another class. It was on this insignificant island in the Bay of Biscay that the first rules of the road at sea and code of international law were compiled. Known as "Les Roles d'Oleron," these early regulations were accepted by all the seafarers of the Western World, and were signed by Eleanor of Guienne in 1152, two years before she united the island to the English crown by marrying Henry Plantagenet. Le Chateau is the principal harbour of Oleron and the centre of a rich oyster fishery. Near by, at St. Pierre, is a curious thirteenth-century tower. Off the island is Fort Boyard, a kind of martello tower, and a similar building called Le Chapus guards the mainland shore of the narrow strait between the island and France.

We passed close to the circular Fort Boyard, and were reminded of Spithead. The flat landscape being distorted with mirage, we had great difficulty in locating the buoys of the ever-narrowing waterway. A swift ebb tide swept us along the intricate winding channel. It was worse than winding, for it turned off at right angle bends and tangents. Corentin was at the helm, and the Viking and I conned her along with the aid of the chart and glasses. On such occasions I find a powerful magnifying glass of great help in unravelling an obscure chart ; when not employed as an aid to navigation it will earn its passage as a pipe-lighter in sunny weather. The buoys were very far apart and almost innocent of paint, and,

I repeat, the day being hot and sunny a great deal of mirage was reflected off the sand-banks and mud-flats. On and on we went, swiftly and more swiftly, as the ebb tide drained out of the strait, and we picked up one buoy after another.

The conditions of time, tide, and weather were ideal for threading this maze of a channel. Windless and sunny, the day yet young, and almost low water ; if we got ashore the young flood would soon float us off again and we had hours of daylight in which to navigate the Bar of Maumusson. As Oleron and the mainland converged we could see no way out ahead ; we appeared to be courting shipwreck on a lee shore of oysters. "What a glorious end !" will exclaim the true lover of the succulent bivalve. As far as we could see there lay no water ahead, nothing but acres of oyster beds. This is the home of the famous green Marennes oysters. Their colour is derived from the green seaweed on which they are bedded. Clad in blue cotton trousers, a veritable host of men and women were engaged in tending their valuable crop. Off Le Chateau, the capital, we found ourselves in a kind of tidal ditch between two oyster beds. The Viking was overcome with mirth at the sight of so many elderly dames clad in the same rig as their husbands, and exchanged much light banter and badinage.

It was a most picturesque spot, the vast fields of oysters and their army of cultivators, with here and there a smack listed over on the mud,

her sails of tan, blue, or ochre hoisted to dry in the sun of early autumn. These craft were from Marennes, a little port up the estuary of the Seudre, though some of them hailed from the island and Rochefort.

At dead low water a mistake in a buoy, which we could not distinguish, put us on a sand-bank. Philosophically we decided to have lunch, and the Viking was dispatched in the dinghy to follow up his acquaintance with the fair sex of Oleron and see what was forthcoming in the way of oysters. After a deal of chaff and laughter he came alongside with four dozen of the fattest extra-specials for 45 sous. The tide had carried us too far over to the mainland side, and we lunched in the very shadow of Fort Chapus. This is a picturesque circular fort in a wilderness of oyster beds; it was built by Louvois, who was War Minister under Louis XIV, and worked in the same spirit as Colbert. While we were enjoying lunch in the sun-baked cockpit the young flood floated us off in his tender embrace. Cautiously, with the aid of chart and glasses, we proceeded on our course towards the terrible Bar of Maumusson. On the Island of Oleron tall firs rose from the golden sands, with here and there a boat hauled out on the beach. Astern, away among the flats and saltings of the River Seudre, towered the slender spire of Marennes, a leading mark to mariners and the hall mark of French oysters. We motored along in the teeth of the tide flooding in over Maumusson Bar. We could now see this redoubtable exit to the open waters of the Bay

of Biscay, while astern the swift tide was rapidly converting the desert of oyster beds into a Venetian lagoon. One by one the sleeping smacks were roused by the incoming tide, until the mirror-like surface of the strait was dotted with a multi-hued fleet of sailing craft seeking Marennes with their succulent freight.

Let me first tell you that Maumusson means *mauvaise bouche*, the ogre's mouth gaping open to gobble you up. That the roar of the surf as it breaks on Maumusson Bar on a bad day can be heard at Marennes, twelve miles away. These and other hair-raising details I culled from *Les Instructions Nautiques* and M. Lentheric's *Côtes et Ports Français de l'Océan*. None of us had been through before, and Corentin had a yarn about a yacht on which he had once been employed putting back to La Rochelle, although there was a Deputy on board anxious to reach Bordeaux. As we approached, we met a fishing-smack rushing up on the tide, and Corentin recognized her as having once belonged to Concarneau, his native place. This the Viking declared to be a good omen, so that we carried on until our hearts turned to water at the sight of what, at first, appeared to be a terrific sea running outside. A moment's reflection convinced me that this could not be, or the fishing-smack would not have carried a topsail and her crew would have been wearing their oilskins. Then we sighted a buoyed channel of smooth water close to the Oleron shore, with, on the port hand, huge oily seas breaking on the bar, and, beyond, a calm sea. On this occasion

Maumusson was in kindly mood, and, keeping in the channel, we passed safely out on to the open Atlantic without shipping a cupful of water. But I could see what a nasty place it would be at spring tides or with even a moderate breeze meeting the tide. Even on this calm day the actual bar was a torment of breakers that would have turned *Sylvabelle* keel upwards in a second had we allowed her to venture out of the buoyed channel.

The line of buoys led us out to the broad bosom of the Bay of Biscay, and we followed a course southward along a coast of tall dunes of white sand topped with pine woods. In due course we made Courbe Point and gave its nasty ledge an ample berth. The smirch of steamers' smoke across the sky indicated the presence of one of the world's great waterways as our gallant little engine brought us across the smooth blue sea into the Gironde estuary. After its confluence with the Dordogne, the Garonne is known as the Gironde. Rising from the Spanish Pyrenees the Garonne flows through over four hundred miles of fertile country, past rich cities such as Toulouse, Agen and Bordeaux to the sea. The confluence with the Dordogne takes place at Bec d'Ambez below Bordeaux; this is a stream of minor importance flowing through some three hundred miles of pretty scenery.

Full of interest is the Gironde. Let us begin with the Cordouan lighthouse at the mouth of the estuary. This is the oldest lighthouse on the coast of France, and was probably founded

by the Moors, although a charter of Henry IV of England, dated 1410, tells us that a lighthouse was erected on the Cordouan rock between 1362 and 1376 by the Black Prince. It will be remembered that Bordeaux and Aquitaine belonged to the English Crown from 1151 to 1453. Froissart relates that in 1372 the annual convoy of English wine ships numbered 200 sail. These wine ships assembled at one of the English Channel ports designated by the King, and sailed to Bordeaux in convoy, escorted by ships of war. They sailed right up the river and anchored off the town, and great was the feasting every year. It will be seen thus, although Bordeaux owes its foundation to a fountain, it was always famous for its wine. Of very ancient origin is the city ; a lake dwelling was recently discovered, complete with oyster shells on the kitchen midden. Much history connected with the Black Prince and, in later days, the French Revolution, has been made on the shores of what sailors call the Bordeaux River.

From time to time we passed a trawler, her sails flapping idly as she rolled to and fro on the windless sea. Of a clean swift model were these fishing craft of almost yachtlike lines. A good turn of speed to stem the tide is a *sine qua non* for all working boats on this coast, hence, no doubt, these spoon-bowed, clipper trawlers. The vast estuary of the Gironde is a masterpiece of the art of lighting and buoyage, and presents no difficulties. We sped over a smooth, windless sea, and by five o'clock had moored up alongside a trawler



A SARDINE SMACK ENTERING CONCARNEAU HARBOUR AFTER
A DAY'S FISHING.



SYLVABELLE IN A LOCK ON THE GARONNE LATERAL CANAL.

in Royan Harbour. Very Southern is Royan—a blend of Spain and Provence on the Atlantic. It is a popular summer resort with the wealthy folk of Bordeaux and a pleasant harbour in good weather, although it dries out, and a southerly blow soon sends in a vigorous roll, when the local craft take up special berths, moored ahead to buoys and astern to stakes. It was dark by the time we had tidied up after the passage, and we were too tired to change into shore-going kit. Nevertheless we made up our minds to have a hot meal in some humble establishment where our sea-going kit would pass without remark. A friendly coastguard told us of the very place to suit our requirements, and after a lengthy search in the dark we found a capital little restaurant near the market. We consumed an enormous quantity of food of various sorts, each dish being more appetizing than the last. Indeed, from now until the end of our journey we never failed to do justice to the culinary art of South-western France. Over coffee and liqueurs in the café we made the acquaintance of a waiter who hailed from Beziers on the Canal du Midi. This fellow made our flesh creep with his hair-raising tales of locks and weirs, all of which subsequently proved to be the product of his own fertile imagination. Going aboard we found the tide right out, and it was quite a gymnastic ending to a perfect day to scramble down from the quay across the deck of the trawler and then drop down on to the cabin top of *Sylvabelle*.

CHAPTER VII

From Sea to Sea

UNDER pleasant weather conditions we got under way the following morning at about nine, just after high water, and proceeded up the Gironde, but we had reckoned without the fierce ebb tide which, running out against us at five knots, gave us ample time to study the scenery. The white houses of Royan, her casino, break-water and silver sands, were soon left astern, and we found ourselves heading for what looked like the open sea, for no land was visible ahead. Before narrowing to a river the estuary broadens out into a vast expanse of water always dotted with shipping, its flat shores lost in haze.

A few miles above Royan the tide held *Sylvabelle* almost stationary off Meschers, where we obtained a good view of the rock dwellings. These caves, cut in the soft stone of the cliffs, are still inhabited, the quaint aspect of the place being enhanced by a row of ancient windmills. Slowly, but surely, our sturdy engine carried us up to Talmont and its picturesque twelfth-century church, on the edge of a cliff. Here the current began to slacken and we made more substantial progress, but I had already given up all hope of

making Bordeaux that day—that is to say, in daylight, for I had no intention of risking my ship in the fierce tideway off the Bordeaux quays in the dark, with tugs, lighters, and liners surging up and down. A perusal of the *Instructions Nautiques* decided me in favour of Pauillac as a suitable anchorage for the night, more especially if I could pick out a hole in the bank—a kind of sluice—called Gaët, which boasted six feet of water at low tide. Before reaching Pauillac we slowed down, and up-stream of a modern, wooden jetty, well equipped with cranes, I sighted a kind of canal entrance with a large sailing barge coming out on the tide. This was Gaët, and we shot in out of the tide and let go close to a stone quay. The natives came down and, after a good stare, decided we were harmless, and went on with the day's work.

Like most mighty rivers the Gironde is rich in mud. This little haven called Gaët was a square, tidal pool formed by a stream draining the neighbouring marshes, and if it was a secluded anchorage free from current and traffic it was as muddy a little spot as one could find. Charles Kingsley in his *Prelude to Hereward the Wake* champions the cause of the Fens and remarks that save Motley in his rise of the Dutch Republic no historian has condescended to tell the tale of the doughty deeds of the lowlanders. I confess to sharing in Kingsley's love of marshes and marshmen and obtain a deal of pleasure from the study of folk in places that the majority of men would describe as mud-holes. What time Corentin looked over

the engine and the Viking indulged in a shave, I sat on the cabin-top and surveyed our surroundings. Above the embankment one could perceive the masts of passing craft, while at the head of the haven an occasional cart rumbled across a quaint stone bridge. A drowsy *douanier* took a long stare at us and I thought he was coming to inspect the ship's papers, but after spitting reflectively in the harbour he strolled away down the river-bank. When he had been gone some five minutes a man in a black cloak leapt ashore from a punt and crouched in the long grass. Suddenly there was the report of a gun and I saw a wisp of smoke float away on the haze. The cloaked figure ran forward, thrust a rabbit under his cloak and strolled off. Then, without even a glance in our direction, he untied his punt and pulled out into the stream. Nobody but a son of the marshes could have spotted that rabbit and poached it so neatly under the very nose of the guardian of law and order. Soon the skipper of a barge came down and asked us politely to shift our berth higher up, as there was no water for his barge except alongside the quay where we lay, and he had a four-wheel cab to ship for Bordeaux that tide. We picked up an even better berth near the bridge and derived much amusement from the subsequent operations of shipping the cab and securing it on deck clear of the boom. It was agreed that it would need the pen of W. W. Jacobs and the pencil of Heath Robinson to do justice to the scene.

I was delighted at having pitched on this

unconventional little anchorage, of which I had never heard until reading the *Instructions Nautiques*. Anyone with a working knowledge of French will find the *Instructions Nautiques* invaluable. There are three volumes of interest to yachtsmen coming out from England. The first describes the coast from the Belgian frontier to Penmarch Point, the second from Penmarch Point to the Spanish frontier, and the third the Mediterranean coast from the Spanish to the Italian frontier. In addition to these sailing directions, the little volumes called *Vues de la Côte*, giving sketches of difficult bits of the north and west coasts of France with the "marks on," will be found a great help. French charts and sailing directions can be obtained from Le Yacht, 55 Rue de Châteaudun, Paris. The *Instructions Nautiques* are really admirable, in that they describe even the most remote creeks and fishing villages with the same wealth of detail as is devoted to the great highways of commerce, such as Havre or Bordeaux. No one should visit Brittany without a copy of Part III of Mr. Frank Cowper's *Sailing Tours: Falmouth to the Loire*, while those who read French should procure *Bretagne, Bords de la Loire et Sud Ouest, Pyrenées*, and *Provence* of Hachette's "Guides Bleus" series. *Pêcheurs Bretons*, by Auguste Dupouy, gives a great deal of interesting information about fishermen and fisheries of the Biscay coast, while the following are novels dealing with the same subject: *L'Océan*, by Charles Geniaux; *Filles de la Pluie*, by André Savignon; and *Peuple de*

la Mer, by Marc Elder ; these are not sensational works compiled in a public library in Paris, but books written on the spot by authors who have made a long study of their subject.

Pauillac, half a mile distant from Gaët, is a good place to buy provisions and wine, being the centre of the famous Bordeaux vineyards and close to Château Lafite, Château Latour, etc. It is only a short walk along the river bank from Gaët Haven and we partook of an excellent dinner at an hotel on the quay. In the morning Corentin laid in a stock of petrol at Pauillac, while I bought some excellent Graves at 2 fr. 25 c. a litre. We shifted out of Gaët Haven before low tide so as to be afloat at slack water, for I wished to carry the flood tide with me right up to Bordeaux and it was essential to be moored up out of harm's way before dark. Just outside the haven we tied up to a huge mooring-buoy and waited for the flood to make.

It was a grand run up this well-buoyed waterway or rather wineway, for the vessels we met were all wine carriers and the banks produce the world's best claret. We passed some charming scenery of a classical nature, and many spots of historical interest. Beychevelle is derived from "*baisser voiles*," for here, in the Middle Ages, sails were lowered to salute the Duc d'Epéron, who collected a toll from passing vessels. Out in the stream were several islands, Saint Louis, Bouchaud, Patiras (possibly derived from *pataras*, which means "runner"), Bouchaud, Sans-Pain. Fort Paté, on an island, off the old-world town of

Blaye, a group of river-craft anchored off Bec d'Ambes at the confluence of the Dordogne and the Garonne, pictures to be conjured up in years to come. Towards 5 p.m. we sighted the masts of the shipping at Bordeaux, and before nightfall we were abreast of Lormont, where I found the anchorage I was looking for at the Point du Jour. We let go close inshore, just down-stream of a fleet of small yachts enclosed with booms. In the morning we made friends with an old fisherman who owned a big yawl anchored close by, which had once been a yacht belonging to the "Ponts et Chaussées," or Trinity Brethren, and was well found below. Our new friend indicated a mud berth in a kind of ditch at right angles to the bank at the foot of his garden, through which he gave us the right of way. Here we tied up for a week's stay; nor could I wish for a better spot, with a nice grassy bank on each side of *Sylvabelle*, tall trees overhead, and ten minutes' walk from the tram into Bordeaux. The only drawback was the swarm of rats which infested the river-bank and did their best to come aboard at night. At high tide we were much inconvenienced with the wash of steamers, particularly that of a fleet of small tugs which fussed up and down continually. Our host was a delightful old Bordelais who did all he could to make our sojourn at Bordeaux agreeable. We had several vinuous gatherings aboard his craft, and to escape the rats the Viking took up his abode at his cottage while I went to an hotel in the centre of the town. Corentin stayed aboard as ship-keeper and rat-catcher.

After a week's stay in the charming city of Bordeaux, we set out once more on our voyage. This time we were to navigate the placid inland waterways from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, from Bordeaux to Cette, and for this part of the voyage my wife and mother joined the ship's company, arranging to sleep ashore at the nearest hotel wherever we tied up for the night.

Before undertaking a cruise on the French canals it is necessary to obtain the permission of the Ministry of Public Works. The application must be written in French on a two-franc sheet of stamped paper (*papier timbré*), which can be obtained at a *bureau de tabac* and should be addressed to Monsieur le Directeur de la Navigation Intérieure au Ministère des Travaux Publics, 244 Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris. Mention should be made of the date on which it is intended to begin the cruise, the proposed itinerary, and the name and dimensions of the yacht. All the canals belong to the Government, and no dues are charged whatever. As a considerable time may elapse before receiving a reply, the application should be made some time ahead. Personally, I submitted my application through the Touring Club de France, but in the case of a boat coming out from England, the owner would be well advised to call at the French Government Touring Office in the Haymarket, where he would receive valuable aid and advice. An account of all the canals and navigable rivers of France, together with a good map, will be found in the *Guide Officiel de la Navigation Intérieure*. This is an

invaluable publication, but is rather vague in regard to information concerning the locks.

During our stay at Bordeaux we had lowered the mast into a crutch, and on the afternoon of Tuesday, October 17, Corentin and the Viking got *Sylvabelle* out of her mud berth, and brought her up on the flood tide to a spot opposite Fenwick's Quay, where they let go in slack water. This quay, called after an English café, is just downstream of the Quinconces, and has some convenient steps. At ten the following morning we embarked the ladies in the dinghy, an event that was complicated by the wash from a passing tug coinciding with the berthing of a sailing barge at the wharf and the arrival alongside of a Customs official, in a steam launch, with a request to see the ship's papers. Our *congé* and tax receipt being in order, we were allowed to proceed. Getting our anchor, we went slowly upstream, against the ebb, and let go close inshore, just above the stone bridge, where we lunched in the cockpit whilst awaiting the tide. This bridge is said to be 270 feet longer than Waterloo Bridge; before its construction, in 1921, the river was crossed by ferry. During lunch we were much interested in the manœuvres of a tug marshalling a string of barges for a tow up to Castets, where they were to enter the canal. It was nearly one o'clock before the flood-tide made itself felt, and we started in earnest on our inland voyage. Very pretty were the banks of the Garonne, well wooded and green. This is the famous Sauternes country, and the map reads like a wine list.

Several islands were passed, and once we scraped over a sandbank. A terrific thunderstorm, which burst overhead in the afternoon, promised an early dusk, which made me abandon the idea of entering the canal that night ; so we anchored off the quay at Langon, a small town on the left bank. Here the most remarkable event was a *salmis* of wood-pigeons for dinner. On the following morning we left at ten, and proceeded upstream against the ebb, which came sluicing down against us, but we went valiantly ahead, taking care to avoid the long wooden groynes which jut out at right angles to the bank.

By eleven o'clock we had completed the 10 kilometres to Castets, and anchored off the lock gate, but so severe was the current that I almost swamped the dinghy in an endeavour to land. We shifted into quieter water above the lock gate, where I was able to get ashore and interview the lock-keeper. I found that we were expected, as a letter had been received from Paris ; and at the sight of my permit the lock-keeper at once began to open the lock and I had to hasten on board and get under way. We had quite a thrill turning in the current, and shot into the slack water of the lock as though *Sylvabelle* had been fired out of a gun. However, we just managed to go astern before the fore lock gate was reached, and the Viking got a turn round an iron rod running up the side of the basin. This lock was very deep, and as we rose *Sylvabelle* was tossed about as though at sea. Most obliging and civil were the lock-keepers, of whom one, a kind of foreman,

lashed his bicycle on deck, and nursed us through the next three locks. We were instructed in the rules of the road in the canal. One must slow down when passing loaded barges; keep clear of tow-ropes and lock gates when a barge is coming out. A short distance in front of every lock is a bollard on the bank; once a craft has passed this bollard nothing else may pass her until she is through the lock. Fishermen and washerwomen on the bank have no rights whatever. All the locks are linked up by telephone, and as soon as one has left a lock the keeper rings up the next lock-keeper to open the gate so that one can enter without delay. The lock-keepers are paid by the Government, and are obliged to work the locks for all crafts allowed on the canal; generally their duties are performed by their female relatives. At each lock they ask to see the permit, or inquire the name of the owner and of the vessel, which would appear to be sheer red tape as no vessel could enter the canal without showing the permit at the first lock. The name of the lock and the distance in metres from its neighbour are inscribed on a board over the door of each lock-keeper's cottage. We found a whistle very useful to call out the lock-keeper on arriving at the lock; indeed, on my next canal cruise I shall install a Klaxon for this purpose.

Very beautiful were the banks of the canal, lined with plane trees, green and yellow in all the glory of their autumn tints. Beyond lay vineyards, a wealth of colour in which russet, gold, and claret predominated.

There were fields of maize, and huge barns, open at each end, in which tobacco leaves were hung up to dry. Surprisingly little traffic was encountered on the canal ; the few barges we met being loaded with barrels of wine, and towed by mules or horses. Towards dusk we arrived at a harbour, 5 kilometres from Marmande, and drove in for dinner.

Friday, October 20, was hot and sunny. Many locks took us higher and higher. Ducks, geese, and washerwomen were taking advantage of the sunshine along the banks, but we passed few fishermen, in spite of the tales they told us at Marmande of gigantic carp. At the end of the day, outside Agen, we met the first double lock, and then the canal narrowed and *Sylvabelle* became an "airship." We crossed the Garonne on a bridge, or aqueduct, high above the river, gleaming silver in its bed below. A unique and wonderful adventure this navigation in the skies. Even that experienced navigator Corentin was impressed at the novelty of crossing a bridge in a boat, and expressed his admiration for the grand view of the valley of the Garonne and the old town of Agen, on a hill, right ahead. At five o'clock we tied up at Agen, having done only 54 kilometres in the day, so many delays had we suffered through the number of locks to be negotiated. The aqueduct we had crossed proved even more impressive when seen from below, being supported by twenty-three arches. Near the station I found the Romanesque cathedral in a rather unprepossessing situation, near some squalid

little houses. Preserved plums, chaselas grapes, *paté de foi gras*, and Armagnac brandy are among the gastronomic delights of Agen.

On Saturday morning we had exhausted the sights of Agen by ten o'clock, and went on board to get under way, when Corentin stated that the local tax-collector had been on board to look at our receipt for the quarter's motor tax, which was, fortunately, all correct. This proved to be a bad day; first of all we had some trouble with some inferior petrol and sooted plugs. Then it rained, and we found it rather difficult to attract the attention of the lock-keepers without going ashore, all of which took time. Moissac proved to be a charming old-world townlet, and made up for some of our troubles. There were delightful people shepherding geese along the bank with long switches, any of whom might have sat for the portrait of Mother Goose. The canal ran through a brick cutting, like the Witham at Lincoln, and by unshipping the crutch, and lowering the mast right down on to the cabin top, we managed to pass under the four swing bridges without having to open them. We passed over another magnificent aqueduct, towering above the River Tarn, a leaden stream far below. On we went, in torrents of rain and pitch darkness, through five locks to Castel Sarrassin, which we should have passed in the dark had not one of the lock-keepers asked for a lift into the little town and shown us the way. However, the shouts in the darkness, flashing of lanterns, glistening oilskins, all became a pleasant reminiscence once we were

enjoying a succulent dinner at the Hôtel Marcillac, where mine host does the cooking himself, coming in from time to time, in his white coat, to see how you appreciate his art. All through this inland trip we partook of a cold lunch on board when under way, but always dined ashore in the evenings, and dined well, for this part of France is renowned for its cooking. Sunday morning proved fine and sunny, and we had an early start, which was just as well, as we had trouble with dead leaves which filled the canal, fouling the propeller and the water intake. A number of fishermen were seated along the bank, and from time to time we sighted shooters in search of those tiny birds which the Southern Frenchman pursues with such energy. At one of the locks the keeper's grand-daughter came out and presented my wife with a bunch of flowers from the garden.

We passed two barges loaded with wine, in tow of three horses; on the poop of each barge was a well-stocked hencoop. We enjoyed a good stretch of 18 kilometres without any locks through pretty scenery, distant hills on the starboard hand, with woods and vineyards to port. Then more locks in rapid succession. The red glow of the setting sun cast a silver sheen over the placid waters of the canal. Night was on us by the time we had passed the last lock before reaching Toulouse, and we had an exciting run along the dark canal.

Ahead we could see the lights of the great city and suddenly the bridge loomed up in front of us. I stopped the engine, and sent Corentin ashore

with an electric torch to spy out the land. He soon returned with a glowing account of a good quay to tie up to beyond the bridge ; moreover, he had seen a tram. So we passed slowly under the bridge into a vast circular harbour, and made fast for the night between two derelict barges. We had now completed our run on the Garonne lateral canal, the distance being 193 kilometres, with fifty-three locks, several of which were double. On Monday morning *Sylvabelle* circumnavigated Toulouse, passing the first four locks of the Canal du Midi and entering St. Sauveur Harbour on the outskirts of the city. It is interesting to note that the Canal du Midi played a leading part in the Battle of Toulouse (April 10, 1814). A French battery at the lock in front of what is now Matabiau Station cut up Freyre's Spaniards, and finally Soult saved his army by withdrawing across the canal, all of which will be found in Napier.

Near the station, with his back to the canal, is a statue of Paul Riquet, the engineer of the Canal du Midi, who was born at Béziers in the reign of Louis XIV. Begun in 1666, the canal from the Thau Lagoon to Toulouse was completed in 1681, a year after Riquet's death. The Garonne lateral canal was not built until the beginning of the last century, nor was the connection made permanent between the Thau Lagoon and the sea at Cette. The canal was certainly a wonderful feat of engineering for the seventeenth century, and cost over 30,000,000 francs. The first canal was dug in England in the reign of Henry I and connected the Trent and Witham in 1134.

We stayed three days at Toulouse to give the motor a good clean up and to cure a leaking petrol tap. No one should fail to visit the curious arcaded Place du Capitole, the brick church of St. Sernin, with a tower in what is called the Toulousain style, and the Cathedral of St. Etienne, which is a quaint architectural jumble.

Before leaving Toulouse we decided to lash the dinghy on deck, as it was always getting in the way in the locks, and by standing up on the stern thwart we could see over the top of it quite well. In our haste to leave Toulouse after this operation, we managed to leave the floorboards of the dinghy behind on the quay at St. Saveur, nor did we notice our oversight until we had been under way a good twenty minutes. This false start was soon atoned for by the increased speed of the motor after its tuning up at Toulouse, and we soon found ourselves bowling along through quite wild country. We put up three widgeon as we rounded a corner, for here the canal had many turnings and hairpin bends. Other wild birds observed on the canal included mallard, kingfishers, woodpeckers and the inevitable magpie. At each lock we admired many fine turkeys and geese, destined for the London market at Christmas. The most interesting place on the day's run, which ended at Castelnaudary, was Avignonet, which is a mile from the canal, but is well worth a visit for its picturesque battlements and fine site on a hill. Here, in 1242, the Albigenses put to death the Grand Inquisitor, and in their turn were burned at the stake. After this we finished

our long climb, having passed through the last lock of the Atlantic slope. Here, in the dusk, we passed the obelisk to Paul Riquet, erected by his descendants in 1825, and the engineer's house in which Wellington signed the Armistice after the Battle of Toulouse.

On the next day, Thursday, October 26, we arrived at Carcassonne from Castelnau-dary. This was the most interesting feature of our inland voyage. Nowhere can one find a more perfect example of mediæval castellated architecture than the Cité de Carcassonne, of which Viollet le Duc, the celebrated French architect, wrote: "I doubt that there exists anywhere in Europe as complete and as formidable a system of defence of the sixth, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, as interesting a subject of study, and a more picturesque situation." A most interesting afternoon was spent rambling about the ramparts and photographing the ancient towers and walls.

A cold drizzle was on tap as we left Carcassonne on Friday morning, but it soon dried up, and we were able to enjoy some interesting mountain scenery, as the canal ran through what is best described as the foothills of the Pyrenees, brown, gaunt and desolate against the skyline. At Trebes brandy was being distilled on the bank, near a church with a square tower, Catalan in character. Turkeys and geese gave way to ducks, goats, and pigs. There were no cows but each lock-keeper had a goat. The washerwomen were quite Spanish in character with black kerchiefs tied over their heads.

At Aiguille lock we sighted the first olive trees, denoting that we were at last in the Mediterranean belt, more cypresses were passed, and a village with a Pyrenean church tower. A night was spent at Homps, and all the next day *Sylvabelle* ran through vineyards, some 53 kilometres, without a lock. Before reaching Béziers the canal had many bends and turns, and for five minutes ran through a tunnel beneath a hill. Just outside Béziers we had to negotiate an impressive ladder of seven locks! Quite in the classic manner is the view of Béziers cathedral towering above the plain and the River Orbe, over which we passed on an aqueduct, and after two more locks found ourselves in a harbour crowded with barges. At Béziers the community dealt in wine in huge quantities. There is wine everywhere—on motor barges, on motor lorries, on rail, and in the hotel we saw men and women sampling wine out of tiny bottles.

Sunday, October 29, was a red-letter day for *Sylvabelle*, for it proved her last on fresh water. It was a warm morning, with a strong southeasterly breeze. We ran along through flat marshy country to Agde, with a flat church tower not unlike Boston Stump, and an imposing lighthouse towering above the marshes. There is a curious circular lock at Agde with three gates, through one of which we passed. At length we spied a breakwater, with a lighthouse at the end of it. We were on salt water once more, and soon had some of it aboard. A furious south-east gale was whipping the shallow water of the lagoon into

whirlwinds of foam. We lunched under the shelter of the breakwater, donned our oilskins, put an extra lashing round the dinghy on deck, and set out on the 20 kilometres across the lagoon to Cette. As the *Instructions Nautiques* gave 3 metres, we steered direct for the mountain above Cette, and only once touched a mud-bank. We sighted some bass leaping above the waves, and put up several packs of very wild duck. There was quite a nasty, short, choppy sea running, and there was none of that Venetian languor usually associated with lagoons. Indeed, we had a wet run, which was all the more marked after our long course of smooth water on the canals. At Cette we passed under a swing bridge into a channel which leads from the lagoon to the outer harbour, and our inland voyage was at an end.

CHAPTER VIII

The Mediterranean from Cette to Menton

NO sooner had we tied up to the quay at Cette than I went up to the outer harbour to take a look at the weather outside. Huge seas were hurling themselves against the breakwater, the wind driving the spray across the road, while the sky was black and ominous. All the fishing-fleet was in harbour, and I could not have had a better opportunity for studying the various types of craft and gear. Moored bow to the quay, in two tiers, were the trawlers, their long unwieldy lateen yards stabbing the skies in serried ranks—a wonderful sight, this survival of the oldest rig in the world. These trawlers are called *tartanes* and work in pairs, towing a trawl, known as a *gangui*, between them. This method of trawling is called *baou* or “ox-fishing” because the boats work in pairs like a yoke of oxen. Besides the *tartanes* the harbour was packed with smaller craft, open boats, also lateen-rigged; these were the tunny boats. The tunny of the Mediterranean is much larger than that caught in the Atlantic, its flesh is red

and it is caught quite close to the shore in nets.

When I returned on board, I found that the glass was still falling, so made up my mind to spend the following day in port, and all hands went ashore for dinner. There is much that is quite Spanish in character at Cette; the houses and their inmates are of Catalan aspect, the local dialect is a form of Catalan, and, to complete the illusion, all the youth and beauty of the town were strolling up and down one brightly lit street, for it was Sunday evening. After dinner we found that the chairs in the hotel café had been pushed back against the wall and, as the clock struck nine, in trooped a bevy of little work-girls in bright yellow, blue, and scarlet, accompanied by rather forbidding mammas with black shawls over their heads. They were promptly joined by their partners, mostly seedy-looking youths of the barber's assistant type. They all danced remarkably well, and really seemed to enjoy themselves.

Monday morning found less wind but a rough sea. However, I determined to go out and have a look at it, as I could see some of the *tartanes* had put out and shot their trawls. Before reaching the outer harbour we had to negotiate four swing bridges which were too low for us to pass under, so that the trams were held up while *Sylvabelle* passed by. As I was very doubtful of being able to make a passage, we did not stop to set up the mast and riggings, but ran straight out to the open sea beyond the breakwater.

There was practically no wind, but a steep, sullen swell and a dirty horizon, which made me decide in favour of another day in port. Coming back, we overhauled a motor pilot cutter in grand style, and took up a berth alongside the canal entrance just below the first bridge. In this canal, which connects the Thau Lagoon with the outer harbour, fishermen in flat-bottomed, double-ended boats were scraping up mussels from the mud, and seemed quite surprised when we politely declined to sample their catch. In the afternoon I went ashore for a stroll round the harbour, and met one of the pilots whom we had passed in the morning. He at once accosted me, and expressed admiration of *Sylvabelle*, inviting me on board his craft, which was a wholesome Havre-built yacht converted for the use of the sixteen pilots of Cette, fitted with a 35-h.p. Couach motor. The pilot, who turned out to be a Breton from Morlaix, married and settled at Cette, gave me a deal of reliable information, free from the exaggeration of the Mediterranean mariner. The weather had moderated considerably, and the fish market presented quite a gay and animated scene, for the *tartanes* were coming in with their catch of red-mullet, soles, sharks, squid and whiting. As the trawlers came in the boy climbed out to the end of the lateen yard and furled the sail, quite a gymnastic performance in a sea-way. The lateen yard is called in Provence *antenne*, because it resembles the antennæ of the grasshopper or *cigale*, the national emblem. Returning to *Sylvabelle* I found mast and rigging set up and the

mainsail bent, moreover, the glass had risen, so I declined a courteous invitation from the Société Nautique de Cette to move into their private corner of the harbour, on the plea of an early start.

Before dawn the following morning Corentin had the Primus going and by 6.15 a.m. we were clear of the harbour. The glass had risen in the night, the wind was a feeble air from the east and clear was the sky, though a lumpy, sullen swell was still rolling in. Palavas, a big bathing-resort, was soon reached, and we crossed the Gulf of Aigues Mortes.

A canal runs up a few miles from Grau du Roi to Aigues Mortes, which was used as a naval base by St. Louis (1244), and whence he set out for the Crusades, embarking at a spot called Grau Louis. Most writers try to make out that the sea once bathed the walls of Aigues Mortes; this has now been proved to be untrue. We could see the walls, ramparts, and towers of Aigue Mortes in the distance, for this ancient city is almost as fine a specimen of a mediæval-walled town as Carcassonne, although lacking the magnificent situation of the latter. Off Espiguette Point we found a steeper sea, and some picturesque *tartanes* from Grau du Roi trawling in pairs. The wind now shifted north-west—very light—but in our favour, so that all sails were set and goose-winged out. I resolved to abandon my original intention of spending the night at Port de Bouc, and carry right on to Marseilles, unless the light north-west breeze increased to a mistral,

in which case I had St. Louis du Rhone and Port de Bouc in which to seek shelter.

The coast was now flat, consisting of sand-dunes cut up into islets—or rather lagoons dotted with sandbanks. This was the Rhona Delta, and set me thinking of the *marismas* of the Guadalquivir below Seville. A mirage rendered this wilderness of sea and sand devoid of vegetation still more strange as seen from the sea. It is reputed to be the home of flamingos and countless wild-fowl, well protected by the dread of fever, which keeps sportsmen away from the lagoons.

Soon we picked up our next landmark along this inhospitable shore, the tall church of Saintes Maries de la Mer. Here, according to a Provençal tradition, there landed about A.D. 40, coming by sea from the coast of Judea, Mary Jacobi, sister of the Virgin Mary, Mary Salome, mother of the Apostle James (the Greater) and John, their servant Sarah, Lazarus, Martha, Mary Magdalen and St. Maximin. The church is fortified for defence against the Saracens and Barbary pirates, and looms very big from the sea. There is an annual pilgrimage to St. Maries, the tomb of Sarah, in the crypt, being venerated by Nomads. This church and legend play a leading part in Frederic Mistral's Provençal poem "Mircio," on which is based Gounod's opera "Mireille."

Off Beauduc Light, our next mark, we had a belated and well-earned lunch. The sea became rapidly worse as we approached Faraman Lighthouse, standing gaunt above the wild coast of the Rhone Delta. According to the *Instructions*

Nautiques the land at Beauduc is advancing into the sea at the rate of 15 metres a year. I decided to carry on for Marseilles rather than run into St. Louis du Rhone for shelter.

It blew fairly hard now, but I kept her before it, going a tremendous pace with the engine running like a clock, all sail spread before the following wind, and a tireless succession of steep seas carrying her along. Although spelt as though it were called after the City of Lyon (Lyons in English), the Gulf of Lyons is said to have been called originally the Gulf of Lions, because the sea in this part of the Mediterranean is as savage as a lion. Shortly after two o'clock the high land above Marseilles became visible, and we passed two small steam trawlers from Port de Bouc towing a trawl between them ox fashion. The lion now began to roar in earnest, and I soon perceived that we were following a course too far to the south-east, but it took a good deal of judgment to choose seas when it was safe to edge her in a trifle without getting one on board. We could not pick out the Couronne Lighthouse at all on the shore, nor could we see the Planier on an islet off Marseilles until after dark, when a light corresponding to that of the Planier became visible on our port quarter. There could be no doubt ; I timed the light three times and it was the Planier right enough. We had overshot our mark, and were two hours ahead of my most liberal estimate of the time required to make the Planier. This was due to the speed at which we had been travelling before the wind and sea,

dead aft. Speed was reduced to dead slow. I luffed up, head to wind, while Corentin went forward and stowed the sails; we then put her slowly at it, almost head on to the short steep seas. Spray and spindrift drenched us to the skin, but not a sea was shipped. The wind died away with the night, and soon I was able to lay a course direct for Marseilles, almost broadside to the seas. She certainly rolled considerably, owing to the weight of the dinghy lashed on the cabin top, but the worst of our adventures on the stormy Gulf of Lyons was over, when up came the moon which had served us so well on that now far-distant night at Les Sables d'Olonne.

The trams ashore were clearly visible a great distance out, so that it seemed a very long time before we entered the Vieux Port. But, in reality, it was only eight o'clock when *Sylvabelle* was tied up safe and sound alongside the Société Nautique houseboat at the foot of the Cannebière, and her owner was soon enjoying the best of dinners farther up the same street. Nothing like a motor-boat to get you home in time for dinner.

Three days were spent at Marseilles, during which a visit was paid to the Colonial Exhibition, a show of great interest. This Exhibition, unlike most of its kind, really depicted life in the overseas possessions of France, while the temple of Angkor and its sacred lake were admirable in every way. *Sylvabelle* was much admired by Marseilles yachtmen, and the evening paper, *Le Soleil*, devoted a most flattering paragraph to our voyage. On the morning of Friday, November 3,

it rained heavily, but I decided to make a short run round to Cassis, fearing to be held up indefinitely by the bad weather foretold by all the weather prophets and Jonahs of the Vieux Port. By two o'clock the rain had stopped, and, as we set out, the sun appeared and lit up Nôtre Dame de la Garde. This we regarded as a favourable omen for the successful termination of our voyage. Outside we found an entire absence of any wind but a steep, sullen swell, which made a curious effect of backwash as we passed close to the Ile Maire, but we soon got the benefit of the lee of the three barren islands of Jaire, Calseraigne and Riou. Very steep and bold was the mainland coast along which we passed close in. Scorched by the fierce rays of the southern sun in summer, and swept by the icy blast of the mistral in winter, this desolate wilderness is, except for a few scattered pines, devoid of all vegetation. Here and there fjords cut into the cliffs, making this Provençal Norway a favourite cruising-ground with Marseilles yachtmen. Tucked away in the bight of a bay, we found Cassis Harbour, which we entered, having first taken a look at the calanque, or fjord of Miou. Viewed from the sea, the entrance to Cassis Harbour seems an impossibly narrow channel between the mainland and the pier head, but espying the masts of a vessel above the breakwater we knew that all was well, and, reducing speed, shot round the pier head on the crest of a wave. Inside we found a charming little harbour with a church and houses typical of Provence, encircled with pine-

clad hills. As the swell set up something of a run in the harbour, we tucked *Sylvabelle* away in the snuggest corner we could find. During the night the run increased, and daylight disclosed seas breaking over the lighthouse. A westerly gale in progress was reported by the crew of a little motor fishing-boat that had fetched her nets in from the bay just in time. Weather-bound we spent the morning watching the fishermen play bowls, and the seas coming in past Cape Canaille to dash themselves to death at the foot of the ruined castle.

Then we discovered in the town hall an interesting little collection of pictures by Provençal artists, and took a stroll up the hills until lunch-time came, and with it the dreaded mistral, for the wind flew to the north-west and settled down to blow in earnest. The sky soon cleared of clouds, and I foresaw another three days at Cassis at least; for the mistral blows for three, six or sometimes nine days at a stretch. The fishermen had put on their mistral boots, a kind of legging with leather feet and very sporting black and white cloth check tops. Not content with the broad effect of their footwear, some of the fishermen, who hailed from Algeria, wore blue pea-jackets adorned with stripes of broad white tape. The mistral soon put the sea down inshore, so that the run in the harbour rapidly subsided. We had moored *Sylvabelle* in Mediterranean style; that is to say, with the anchor out ahead and two stern fasts to the quay. It is a good precaution to drive the anchor well home by heaving on the

chain or going astern if the ship is to be left unattended for any length of time in unsettled weather.

On Sunday morning I found that the glass had risen during the night, and that the wind was less violent. Corentin and I went up to the sea wall and found that the sea inshore was quite smooth, so we got under way about 9.30 a.m. I expected to find shelter under the cliffs so far as the Bec de l'Aigle, round which lay the Bay of La Ciotat and smooth water. If the wind freshened I intended to spend the day at La Ciotat ; if the weather improved, which I doubted, I would carry on to Toulon.

In Cassis Bay we found ideal conditions—smooth blue water, brilliant sunshine, and but a mild breeze—so mild that the Viking, who knew not the guile of the Mediterranean, talked glibly of Toulon. Although we hugged the shore, a stiff breeze and a big sea were encountered so soon as we had doubled Cape Canaille. Grandiose was the semaphore station, towering above us, perched high on the magnificent cliffs. Astern, great waves reared their white crests above the dark blue—almost black sea. The mistral began to pipe up again in earnest as we scudded along, close under the cliffs of red earth, reminding me a little of Dawlish, only here the cliffs were of more fantastic shapes and dotted with scanty pines, the colouring being much more brilliant than anything to be seen in Northern waters. These wonderful cliffs terminated in a point known as the Bec de l'Aigle, the Eagle's Beak,

waiting to gobble up unwary navigators. I steered round, broadside on, for a minute, until we found smooth water beneath the tall cliffs, and threaded a channel between the mainland and the little Ile Verte, off which a couple of red-flagged buoys denoted a tunny net. Then, having passed between the twin lighthouses on either side of the breakwater, *Sylvabelle* found herself in a spacious, sunlit harbour with large steamers and the dockyard of the Messageries Maritimes.

It was Sunday morning, and a crowd was sunning itself on the bright quays. There were many small fishing-boats fitted with single-cylinder engines of various makes. On the quays were pots and traps for crawfish and murrey, also tunny nets, and fine long-lines with gut snoods, neatly coiled in shallow baskets—in fact, all the paraphernalia of long-shore fishing. This was La Ciotat, a typical Provençal port on a vast bay.

The glass continued to rise, and on turning out the next morning—Monday—I found a bright sun in a clear sky and a smooth sea devoid of wind. By eight o'clock we had breakfasted, replenished the larder, and were at sea, enjoying a delightful view of the Eagle's Beak, more fantastic than ever on the starboard quarter as we set a course for Cape Sicié, which we soon passed, leaving Bandol a few miles to port. Cape Sicié, a grand cliff and very wild, is the most southern land of France. Here a light easterly air was felt, and the sun disappeared behind a bank of cloud. By 11 a.m. we were abreast of

the entrance to Toulon, but determined to carry on until night or bad weather overtook us, for such a grand day for making a passage was not to be thrown away at this uncertain time of the year. Accordingly I steered for the high land at the end of a narrow tongue of salt marsh called the Giens Peninsula, and negotiated the pretty channel between the land and the island of Porquerolles, the first of the islands of Hyères, a famous fishing-ground in high favour with the yachting fraternity of the Riviera. Very southern and delightful was the scenery, and we began to feel the charm of the Riviera already upon us. In the vast bay between the islands of Hyères and the mainland we met a flotilla of small lateen-rigged fishing-boats bound for Salins de Hyères. To obtain the full benefit of the light breeze they had set a comic collection of sails on sprits and spars jutting out at crazy angles from their lateen mainsails.

It was too early to bring up for the night at any of the islands, nor could we make St. Tropez, the next harbour of any consequence, before dark, so I decided to spend the night in the tiny harbour of sun-kissed Calvalaire at the foot of the forest-clad Maures Mountains, where I had sailed in my motorless days and had many friends. We drew rapidly in from the islands to the steep coast beyond Lavandou, where the cork and pine forests and maquis of Mediterranean heather run down the sides of the hills to the very edge of the sea. Rounding Cape Calvalaire, we passed the wreck of a Spanish steamer, said to be a smuggler, and

let go in the tiny, silent harbour of Calvalaire, with stern fasts to the weather-beaten breakwater, and facing the superb sands, forest, and mountain. The few fishing craft were hauled out high and dry, for in onshore blows the sea sweeps right over what is now left of the breakwater. We spent only one night in this charming solitude, Tuesday morning seeing us early scudding across the blue waters of the bay with the mainsail set before a jolly northerly breeze. It was a grand run, with delightful scenery and sunshine, but between Capes Lardier and Taillat the wind shifted to the north-west and I saw we were in for another mistral. It was not yet nine o'clock, so that I considered we should have time to reach St. Tropez before the wind freshened to its usual midday violence. For the information of anyone caught in a mistral near Cape Lardier I would recommend the cove between Capes Lardier and Taillat, but on this occasion I carried on for St. Tropez.

Off Cape Camarat the breeze freshened, and we had to lower the mainsail in a hurry, as the fierce squalls came off the high land about the old walled village of Ramatuelle. When we rounded the Mouette beacon, off Cape St. Tropez, we found the wind dead ahead, and as we opened the Gulf of St. Tropez it blew in our teeth with great violence. Our sturdy engine drove us through it in clouds of spray. The seas were short, but had not time to be steep, although it was quite a useful demonstration of a mistral, and made a very considerable reduction in our speed of



Photo by G. K. Ballance, F.R.P.S.
A BEAUTIFUL BAY ON THE ESTEREL COAST, NEAR AZAY.

eight knots. However, we were soon moored up in St. Tropez Harbour among a jumble of small craft, and spread out our gear to dry in the hot southern sun. Small lateen-rigged coasters—*tartanes*—mostly fitted with motors, use St. Tropez, carrying the excellent wine of the surrounding hills to Cannes and Monaco. Over our evening coffee in a cosy grog-shop we made the acquaintance of several of the *tartane* skippers, who changed their Provençal jargon into French of sorts for our benefit. Daybreak of Wednesday, November 8, saw a rise in the glass and the *tartanes* getting under way, for the mistral was stilled. By 7 a.m. we were off Sardinaux Point, where the clear sky and a couple of ominous squalls led me to expect another day of mistral, but once across the Gulf of Frejus I anticipated little difficulty in coasting along to Cannes. We overtook one of the *tartanes* we knew, and they hailed us with a warning to keep close inshore, which I did until off St. Aygulf.

Rounding Cape Grammont we found in the little red cove of Agay the brilliant sunshine and colouring of the real Riviera. Cannes was passed, and the Lerins Islands, with the Monk's Tower, and the prison of the Man in the Iron Mask. By 11 a.m. we were off Cape Antibes, and I could distinguish the Grammont Mountain above Menton. Nothing could surpass the beauty of the scenery as we crossed the Bay of Angels; the white houses of Nice in the foreground, then the bare rocks of the mountains, dotted with hill villages, and in the distance the glory of the snow-

clad Alps. We lunched off Cap Ferrat and drew in towards the low land of Cap Martin. To port lay Monaco, ahead was Italy, and soon we found ourselves in Garavan Bay, where *Sylvabelle* entered Menton Harbour to end her voyage in the shadow of the Alps.

CHAPTER IX

A Riviera Fisherman's Regatta

WITH moorings laid down in Menton Harbour *Sylvabelle* spent a delightful winter. Many were the day cruises along the coast; eastward to San Remo, and westward to Cannes.

Since the days of the subtle Ulysses the mariners of the Mediterranean, from the nature of the local climatic conditions, have carried on no small part of their navigation under oars. This is particularly the case on the Riviera coast, where there is either too much wind for small craft or none at all. From the earliest times it has been customary to beach boats every night in the Mediterranean, and this custom survives at the present day among the fishermen of Provence and Liguria, even in places where breakwaters have been constructed to provide secure anchorages. This all tends to favour the use of a boat of the galley type, for a deep-keel craft, capable of carrying a spread of canvas in a breeze of wind, is rarely suitable for beaching, thus the Riviera fishermen rely to a great extent on their oars. They are clever at beach work and hauling out, while their system of trawling must be of great antiquity. A boat is anchored and rowed astern, while the very long warp (to

which the anchor is bent) is paid out over the bow. When the end of the warp is reached the trawl is shot, and all hands heave on the anchor warp, which has the effect of towing the trawl along the bottom of the sea, when the warp is up and down ; that is to say, when the boat being over her anchor the trawl can be towed no farther, it is hauled overboard, and the operation begun all over again. If we remember the great depth of the Mediterranean, even quite close inshore, along the Riviera coast, the row out and home, under a hot sun, and the endless heaving and hauling we shall see that the Ligurian fishermen, despite their outwardly poor physique, must be men of some brawn.

Happily inspired, the Menton Sporting Club organized an International Fisherman's Regatta of Rowing Races. International, because Menton is situated on the Franco-Italian Frontier, and some good sport was expected from the fishermen of Ventimiglia. Most frontier dwellers are staunch free-traders, so that we need not be surprised to hear that the fishers of Ventimiglia are ardent disciples of Yawkins and the "King of Prussia." Many a bale of silk is run into France under cover of night, and many more are the parcels of coffee and sugar taken back into tax-ridden Italy. For this work, light, fast boats and sturdy oarsmen are required. Besides adjusting the inequalities of the revenue the men of Ventimiglia have some pretty fish-poaching tricks, such as shooting a seine round a motor-car head-lamp at night, and casting overboard a bottle contain-

ing guncotton and a lighted fuse. Altogether they are a daring crew.

The first date fixed for the regatta was productive of nothing but a tramontane which raised a heavy sea, so that the meeting had to be postponed until the following Sunday. A prize list of two thousand francs proved very attractive to the Italians, who would nearly double their money by changing it into lire. There were to be three races, one reserved for Mentonese boats, six men and a cox, over a course of 2,000 metres. The second race, open to all comers, was for four rowers and a cox, in boats with or without bilge strakes, over a course of 1,800 metres, and the third race, the "star turn," was for eight oarsmen and a cox, all comers, but in boats provided with the bilge strakes, in general use on this coast to protect the bilge against the shingle when being hauled out.

Ideal were the weather conditions on the Sunday finally fixed for the races; the sun shone down from a brilliant blue sky, as it rarely shines elsewhere, in Europe, than on the Riviera. There was an entire absence of even the gentlest zephyr, and the sea was in that condition known in England as a flat calm, and on the Riviera as *bonasse*. From early morning, Menton Harbour presented a scene of feverish activity only known on Regatta Day, or upon the arrival of the bi-annual collier; boats which I had previously regarded as being on the quay solely to enhance the picturesque, were being launched by a perspiring crowd of black-hatted fishermen. Two boats were practis-

ing starts, beneath a volley of vociferous advice from their friends ashore.

Toward noon, from my vantage point among the olive groves of Garavan, I descried a procession of five boats in line ahead, rounding La Mortola Point. These craft, crowded with men and gay with bunting, came on at a smart pace, their oars flashing in the southern sun. My thoughts went back through the ages, to the ancient navigators and their galleys, and I found myself repeating Matthew Arnold's lines :

As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea
 Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
 Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
 The fringes of a southward-facing brow
 Among the Ægean isles ;
 And day and night held on indignantly
 Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
 Green bursting figs, and tunnies steeped in brine ;

And knew the intruders on his ancient home,
 The young light-hearted Masters of the waves ;
 And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail,
 And day and night held on indignantly
 O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
 Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
 To where the Atlantic raves
 Outside the Western Straits, and unbent sails.

It was a beautiful and inspiring sight to behold these boats crossing the sapphire bay from Italy, over the same course as Cæsar's galleys, both ships and crews but little changed down the centuries.

The first race was due to start at two o'clock. Ten minutes before the hour we had three Mentonese craft lined up, and could study the physique of the crew and the lines of the boats. The former, with the latter, were typical of the South, the men lean and swarthy, the craft canoe-sterned galleys. Amid the cheers of the spectators on the shore, the three boats got well away together, and kept together away down the mark, where we were waiting to judge a foul, if one should occur when turning, as is so often the case in races of this kind. There was little to choose between the boats: St. Maurice Louise actually won. The crews were obviously rowed out and it was a genuine race. On the alleged plea of inferior hulls, the Mentonese would not compete with the men of Ventimiglia; I think the real reason was the reluctance of the free and independent citizens of Menton to take violent exercise after a Sunday helping of macaroni.

For the second race, for fours, there were six starters, all from Ventimiglia. The names of the boats were *Eliseo*, *Emanuele*, *Poco Piano*, *Angelina*, *Ilde* and *Natale*, and one of them had been specially built for the race at Varazze, a famous yard near Genoa. This craft was painted pale green and closely resembled a Roman galley, having a curved bow, or prow, like that of the ship of Ulysses depicted on a Greek vase in the British Museum (of which an illustration will be found on page 410 of Smith's *Smaller Classical Dictionary*). Is this a case of the survival of the fittest, or lack of initiative on the part of the boat-designers

of the Mediterranean? Perhaps tradition. The same type of bow will be found on the ships of the Columna Rostrata of Duilius, and on the average Canadian canoe, nor is it unknown to battleships.

The event of the day was the eight-oared race. Four boats, all Italians, entered, and *Natale* won. It was a capital race, though there was nearly a foul on the rounding point. The crews were a swarthy set of piratical-looking fellows, mighty picturesque. In several of the boats all the rowers were seated two on each thwart, while in two of the boats, bow and stroke occupied a thwart to themselves, while six rowed double banked. Style was of the "catch as catch can" order, there being more "arm hoicking" than leg drive, though some of the younger members of the crews made a praiseworthy attempt at body swing, which causes me to think that they had been coached by some member of a rowing club from the Italian Lakes. Contrary to expectation, there were no fouls or disputes, rather to the disappointment of some of the spectators, who had secretly hoped to see a little knife-play. Very light were the Italian boats, and the coxes knew their job, urging on their crews at the critical moment, and sparing the rudder. The oars of practically all the competing craft were much too short—why, I know not—tradition again, perhaps. It was a very interesting little regatta, almost classical; one can imagine the Ancient Greeks holding just such a meeting. Nowhere can one find more beautiful settings for sports afloat than

in the sapphire bays of the Riviera, of which the most lovely is that between Cape Martin and Bordighera, where the Maritime Alps rise sheer from the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

Part II

1923—1924

CHAPTER I

“Sylvabelle II” and Her Maiden Voyage

FINDING her somewhat small for extended cruising I sold *Sylvabelle* on the Riviera in May, 1923. For her successor I returned to the same builder, Monsieur Rondet, of Nantes, and together we evolved *Sylvabelle II*. She is based on the design of the new motor sardine-boats, but to enable her to put up a creditable performance under canvas we rounded off her forefoot and added an iron keel of slightly over one ton. For the same reason I gave her 3 metres beam to an overall length of 11 metres, with a maximum draught of 1 metre 30 (4 feet 3 inches). These concessions to sail were made on the understanding that she would attain the same speed as the smaller boat under power, and on trial she gave an easy seven knots. The engine was a 13-14 h.p. Bettus-Loire, running on paraffin at about 600 m.p.m., after starting on petrol.

With regard to a suitable rig we had a good deal of discussion. At first I thought of keeping to the fisherman's twin lugs, but finally I decided to give the fashionable Bermudian rig a trial.

There were two objections to this rig: first, the long mast; second, the fact that the after-leach is apt to get slack and bag. The latter objection was overcome with battens, and the first by adopting the ketch rig. My mainmast was the exact length of the boat, so that when it is lowered for inland cruising there is no overhang; I unshipped it from the tabernacle and it rested on two crutches. This rig is easily handled by one man. The advantages of the Bermudian rig are obvious: one halyard, no weight aloft, yet a tall sail that catches the light airs above the steep swell of the Mediterranean. By the way, the old lateen rig, with its unwieldy yard, is still in favour, not only by fishermen and coasters, but with many Marseilles yachtmen, because it is a high-peaked sail and catches the wind over the tops of the short seas of the Gulf of Lyons and enables craft to carry their way even when in the valley between two seas.

Sylvabelle II has proved herself a very dry boat, and her bow, with its bold spring and ample sheer, is a very pleasing feature. Owing to a slight suggestion of tumble home, the square transom stern is relieved of any suspicion of heaviness.

The layout below is as follows: Forward are chain space and a forecabin with a cot for my paid hand; there are plenty of lockers for his kit and stores; aft of the forecabin, but bulkheaded off, is the main cabin. This is entered by a companion on the port side, which descends into a dressing-room one metre in length and running right across the ship. It contains a

lavatory, two large cupboards, and coathangers along the after-bulkhead which separates this dressing-room from the engine-room. The cabin is entered from the dressing-room; there is no door, but a curtain can be drawn across to keep the mosquitoes out. At the foot of the ladder, in the dressing-room, I can stand upright to shave. In the cabin is a folding table. The backs of the settees fold down at night and form beds with well-fitted shore-going kapok mattresses. I can sit upright in bed and stand upright under the skylight. There are four portholes, two of which are right forward, so as to get a good draught right through when under way. The engine-room is reached by a door on the port side of the cockpit; there is plenty of room to get round the engine, everything being very accessible, with plenty of room to work. All round the engine-room are large cupboards for engine and boatswain's stores. There are two portholes, and a skylight is arranged over the engine.

The cockpit has the usual lockers and folding seats. The little ship is steered with a tiller, and the engine controls are carried to within reach of the helmsman; all sheets are also led aft, so that *Sylvabelle II* can be used as a genuine single-hander.

Fuel is carried in three tanks filled from the deck, and spare drums of paraffin are stored in a large locker aft.

As we do a good deal of fishing, a substantial tender was a prime necessity, and I decided to use an old 13-foot centreboard boat, with the plate

withdrawn, in place of the usual dinghy, which is too small for carrying nets, lobster pots, etc.

There were the usual delays in taking delivery of my new ship. At last she was ready for a trial spin, and on going down to the yard one morning I found that all was ready for the traditional run along the River Erdre. The *chef monteur* cranked her over, a pleasing purr issued from the exhaust, and away we went to Sucé. The next morning found us out on the Loire. Corentin, my Breton paid hand, swilled the decks with ample libations of Loire water to remove all traces of those mechanics and shipwrights he holds in such abhorrence. He is a true sailor, only happy on blue water with no land in sight and a wide horizon broken only by topsails of a distant vessel. Nantes was soon far astern and, after passing a few townlets, the great river broadened, and we were abreast of St. Nazaire, the vast artificial harbour at the mouth of the estuary. An easy and entirely satisfactory run took us round to Pornic, where we spent a few days to find out all those hundred and one details that had been overlooked in the builder's yard.

At length we were ready for sea, but the sea was not ready for us, for we had been so delayed that our departure coincided with the equinoctial gales. At last our patience was rewarded by a high glass and a fine spell of light, off-shore, north-westerly weather. So soon as we were afloat we left Pornic on the afternoon tide of September 26 and crossed the Goua Causeway bound for the Goulet de Fromentine. We brought up for the



Photo, C. E. Eldred.

SYLVABELLE IN MENTON HARBOUR.

night on the seaward side of Fosse Pier, which is on the northern extremity of Noirmoutier Island. There was no shelter from the fierce tide which was streaming out through the narrow channel which separates the island from the mainland, but it is a favourite spot of mine. There are sweet-scented pinewoods and miles of silver dunes, a couple of wooden piers and some minor nautical activity in conjunction with the steamer to Yeu Island. It was a fine warm evening and we dined in the cockpit, with curlews calling across the dunes, as the harvest moon sailed slowly up from the Vendée marshes.

The clatter of wooden shoes on Fosse Pier awoke us at dawn, and by half-past seven we had breakfasted and a swift ebb-tide was sweeping us out to the open sea. The Braillard Bank and the Marguerites Ledge safely negotiated, we had time to look about us. Ideal weather for our cruise: a flat calm, hot sun and blue sky. Seaward lay Yeu Island, a jewel set in the haze of early morning; the sails of some tunny-smacks leaving the island were distorted by mirage into phantom ships of the "Flying Dutchman" order. Off St. Gilles Croix de Vie a few crabbers were pottering lazily along the shore, they had miniature sprit-sail mizzens to keep them head to wind when hauling their lobster pots, and reminded me of old days in Start Bay. A note of vivid colour was provided by the red Garibaldi shirts of the crew of a fine sardine-smack from Les Sables d'Olonne. Ashore, a fisher hamlet or so was indicated by red roofs among the pines, or

a spire raking above the golden dunes. Here and there a white feather of surf disclosed a submerged reef ready to entrap the unwary mariner. Aboard all went well, the engine was ticking over like the proverbial clock. Abreast of the Barges Lighthouse we sighted the Sablais sardine-fleet hopelessly becalmed on an emerald sea. The men were out in their boats, trying for fish in a faint-hearted way.

We could imagine their feelings when a couple of motor sardine-boats came in from the horizon and motored triumphantly home to Les Sables. These were the craft that inspired *Sylvabelle II* and first opened my eyes to the Bettus-Loire engine, and it was very interesting to see the boats at work. We did not enter Les Sables, as it was only shortly after noon, and I wished to make the Gironde while the weather held good. From the sea Les Sables d'Olonne has a very white, sunny, southern aspect, in keeping with the handsome Iberian fishwives who throng the quays. Soon the Baleine Lighthouse was sighted and we picked up the long, flat island of Ré. Several trawlers from La Rochelle were passed, both steam and sail, the latter being painted every colour of the rainbow, even pink. A liner was anchored off La Pallice and a tanker entered just ahead of us. La Pallice seemed as desolate as ever, nothing moving except a tug or two, and the wheezy old ferry steamers out to the islands. True, we sighted a couple of small yachts, a yawl and a cutter, rather nice craft too. We picked up a vacant buoy for the night and went ashore

to eat the worst dinner in Europe. At two in the morning a pilot cutter and trawler laid claim to a share in our buoy, so we turned out to rig fend-offs and make the necessary adjustments.

Dawn showed a very high glass and a thick fog; by eight this had cleared, and we passed out between the islands of Ré and Oleron on to the unruffled bosom of the Bay of Biscay. Very beautiful is Oleron with stretches of rock-bound coast varied with sun-kissed coves and leagues of golden sands fringing the vast solitude of the pine forests. Carrying on all day over the calm, sunny sea we picked up the buoys marking the Gironde entrance, and made Royan at five, after a little trouble with a choked jet off the Cordouan Light.

This is one of the most ancient and certainly the most beautiful of lighthouses, a fitting monument to human endeavour down the ages.

An admirable and very courteous harbour-master assigned us a berth ahead of the *Ponts et Chaussée* steamer. This vessel, the *Quinette Rochement*, works up and down the Gironde in connection with the excellent buoyage system. It was very hot at Royan, and we were glad to change into summer kit. There were plenty of people bathing and on pleasure bent, despite the end of the season.

Royan Harbour being tidal, we were obliged to leave soon after breakfast on September 29 and take up a berth off the breakwater to await the flood tide. Last year I had burnt fuel in a vain fight against the ebb, this year I determined to

profit by past experience. I am always impressed by the width of the Gironde, which becomes a veritable inland sea a little way above Royan. We picked up a buoy off Gaët Haven, our old haunt of last year, and dined ashore at Pauillac, a water-side townlet famous for its claret, with colliers from the Tyne, pilots and a foundry.

As we made fast to the buoy one of the Gironde sailing barges came out of the Gaët Haven and carried out a wonderful piece of watermanship, only possible to a born ditch-crawler with an extensive store of local knowledge. There was no wind and a fierce tide, yet the venerable skipper shot out of the narrow gate, passed neatly ahead of our buoy and was swept swiftly away towards Bordeaux. These barges are always well handled and make me think of their Thames brethren. To the mariner, tides are human—friends or foes according to circumstances.

Our reward for coming aboard early was to see the harvest moon rise red over the waters of the Gironde, and turning out early the following morning, we beheld an equally beautiful sunrise.

Leaving our buoy at Pauillac at 6.45 a.m., our progress over the flood tide was soon checked by an early morning mist.

In a short time good King Sol soon gained the mastery, and we proceeded merrily on our way up the broad river to Blaye. Here we landed in search of bread and petrol, for we had trouble with our paraffin, which kept choking the jet, although we strained it before filling up at Royan. One of the quaintest villages on the river, Blaye

has an interesting history dating from Roman days. Fort Paté, on a neighbouring islet, was built in the seventeenth century. On nearing Bordeaux we were boarded by the Customs, who darted out from a hole in the bank in a fast motor-boat. Happily the ship's papers were all in order and we were allowed to proceed on our way. This year I did not lie down at the usual yacht anchorage at the Point du Jour, but carried on up stream and let go on the right bank, just below the stone bridge opposite the Bastide Station. It was very hot, not a breath of wind and a relentless sun beat down from a cloudless sky. "Grand weather for the vintage," we were assured.

We sat panting under the awning after lunch and had plenty of leisure to admire the handsome sweep of the quays at the foot of the Quincences. A score of cod-schooners from the Grand Banks lay in the stream, and their crew kept pulling ashore in the dories in which they fish ; they were an interesting study. Some were quite old men although there were several youths that might have stepped out of the pages of *Captains Courageous*. Although theirs is a hard life, many prefer it to any other form of seafaring. Passing under their stern one was overpowered by the stench of fish. Bordeaux is the market of salt cod, and I saw vessels from Granville, St. Malo, Cancale and Lorient. Our nearest neighbour was a 50 h.p. Lorraine-Dietrich-engined tug undergoing an overhaul ; we soon became fast friends with the crew and their cheery skipper. Our berth was close to one of the pontoons used by

the fussy little river steamers, the crews of which also took a great interest in *Sylvabelle II*.

Corentin was rather worried about lowering our tall mainmast. After a good deal of consideration we put her bows on the high wharf at low water, and I slacked away the mast with a tackle from the top of the wharf. Then we laid in stores and stowed away legs, sails, rigging, and gear in the engine-room and made all snug for the inland voyage. We, consisting of Corentin and a small boy of thirteen, with a much-to-be-encouraged taste for the sea, and myself.

CHAPTER II

The Inland Voyage

ON October 2 we cast off our warps at Bordeaux and motored up the Garonne, keeping a weather eye lifting for groynes which jut out into the channel at right angles to the bank. This channel is not buoyed or marked in any way, and the navigator is entirely dependent on his watermanship and sea-sense to keep out of trouble. We ran on three sand-banks in the course of the morning, the last time being badly on the ebb tide, but by running out the kedge in the dinghy and reversing the engine we managed to scramble back into deep water.

It had been a morning of adventure on the swift waters of the Garonne—a beautiful river, but treacherous. I think some river god lurks among the golden sand-banks to lure the unwary mariner to destruction, distracting his attention with dark-eyed maidens gathering grapes among the vineyards. Before noon the first lock of the canal at Castets, sixty miles above Bordeaux, hove in sight. This lock is entered at an acute angle with the main stream of the Garonne, and is a very intricate piece of watermanship. There was a fierce ebb tide sluicing down against us

and setting right on to the piles of a railway bridge, the channel was very narrow and hedged in with sand-banks, both of the twin locks were closed, and the lock-keeper informed us in patois from the top of an embankment that two barges were coming out. We kept the engine running at such a pace that we just maintained our position against the tide, and cleared both anchors ready to let go instantly in case of engine trouble. Slowly the lock gates creaked open and a huge barge emerged ; we shot past it into slack water, where our reverse pulled us up within a foot of the forward gate of the lock. We had done with kedging off, with hauling on heavy warps at midnight and kindred tidal amusements. We were on the placid lily-carpeted waters of the canal, and we were very hungry.

After lunch we began to climb, lock after lock, at less than mile intervals, and by night-fall we had our feet well up the ladder that was to take us up from sea-level to the fertile *coteaux* of Gascony. The canal is the property of the State and under the control of that excellent body Les Ponts et Chaussées. In striking contrast to our weed-choked canals, this inland waterway was in excellent repair. Plane trees and poplars lined the banks, and beyond were vineyards or fields of maize and tobacco.

The latter is grown under State control and gathered into huge barns, where the leaves are hung up to dry.

Our first night in the canal was spent in the open country. We tied up beneath the plane

trees at the foot of a pine-clad slope. We were self-contained, no need to land or seek the village wine-shop. Copiously did we dine in our snug cabin. This is the great joy of travelling by yacht—one is at home all the time. One dines at one's own hour, smokes one's own pipe in peace over a favourite book, and turns into one's own comfortable berth in place of the unappetizing bed at the local ale-house. We were water gipsies. These sylvan anchorages, far from even a village, were one of the most delightful features of our inland voyage. How pleasant to awake at dawn and lie in one's own warm berth listening to the songs of the birds, and the morning greeting of some farm lass to her lover on the way to the vintage!

When canal cruising it is a great mistake to set oneself a daily stage. Half the enjoyment of the day's run is spoilt by fear that one will fail to reach the night's halting-place. On this cruise we were self-contained and independent of the shore, so that when night fell and we could no longer see ahead we drew in to the bank and tied up to a tree for the night.

Good progress was made to Toulouse. We duly admired, once more, the wonderful aqueduct over the Garonne at Agen. At dear old Dutch Moissac we met the Toulouse style of brick architecture. The canal runs through the heart of the sleepy little town—there are plane trees and quaint peeps. Many delightful old citizens brought their families down to the waterside to gaze at us as we waited for the four green

swing-bridges to be opened. Beyond Moissac the canal crosses the Tarn on another aqueduct, affording a grand vista of swift river and distant uplands.

The Tarn is a river in the grand manner and recalls some of those streams which flow into the Bay of Biscay from the Cantabrian Mountains. It is at Moissac that the Tarn, after passing Albi, Montauban and other ancient cities, joins the Garonne on its way to the sea. It is classed as navigable for 147 kilometres above the confluence, and there are thirty-one locks, for it is canalized, but there is practically no traffic.

At Toulouse we passed on to the Canal du Midi, more than a hundred people watching us through the Matabiau lock in front of the railway station. A pleasant feature of Toulouse are the old-world brick harbours for barges; they lend a Dutch aspect to a city in reality typical of Southern life, a city of thickly thronged streets and vast open-air cafés.

After laying in a supply of *pâté de foie gras*, a local speciality, and collecting our mail from the post-office, we sailed from picturesque St. Saviour's Haven with its mellow brickwork, gabled houses and homely barges.

Very old and respectable is the Canal du Midi. It is quite a change from the formal lateral Garonne canal, winding between sedgy banks with tall avenues of poplars. Oxen are working in the fields, happy families pass on mule-drawn barges. Forage for the draught animals is car-

ried on the bow of the barges with hen coops amidships. Most of the locks are double; they are quaint, with mellow masonry and aged hags working the gates and sluices. In the cool shade of poplars or plane trees, patient mules are cropping the grass until their barge is locked through. Formerly a *coche d'eau* or water-bus plied between Toulouse and Cette, towed by horses. The night was spent in the open country near the highest lock on the Atlantic slope.

On the morning of Sunday, October 7, we passed an obelisk to the great Riquet, the seventeenth-century engineer of the canal, at Naurose, a kind of reservoir at the watershed. We were in great heart at the beginning of the ascent to the Mediterranean, the promised land of blue skies and sapphire seas, although it was a morning of rain, many locks, and a bitter pill administered by a genial one-legged lock-keeper. They were changing a lock gate, and all traffic was suspended beyond Castelnaudary. So far as our lame informant knew we might be held up for a week—nobody could say but the section engineer at Castelnaudary. We pushed on to Castelnaudary with all speed, too anxious to enjoy the scenery, although the rain had stopped. The engineer was absent down the river, at the lock in question, some miles distant, so I got through to him on the telephone and received an optimistic message in English that we were to stay at Castelnaudary until the lock was open on the following day. This cheered me for the time, but as a matter of fact *Sylvabelle II* did not get through

that lock until the following Friday evening at five o'clock. The engineer had served in China at the Customs, under Sir Robert Hart, whence his knowledge of English. My chief complaint was the fact that I had not been warned about the closing of the lock, for I could easily have started an hour earlier and got through. All was done to pacify me and I settled down to pass the time as agreeably as possible at Castelnau-dary.

The following is extracted direct from my note-book. In moments of stress one's impressions as recorded at the moment are generally true to life :

"Castelnau-dary is a stagnant, bucolic town, or rather overgrown village. A church in the curious style of Toulousian brickwork and many quaint ill-paved streets of ancient Spanish aspect. A fine view across rolling plains to the distant serrated peaks of the Pyrenees, gleaming white with snow in the southern sunshine. The people are Pyrenean in nature, and stare at *Sylvabelle II* in stolid rows, leaning over the bridge and spitting into the lake with astonishment. This lake lends a certain aspect to the town ; in the middle is an island formed of rushes grown about the ribs of a derelict barge. On the shore of the lake is a dry dock for the repair of barges, two are hauled out for caulking—charming subjects for the artist—and I regret the absence of Commander Eldred, to do justice to the planks and pitch. The lake is, in reality, a reservoir for keeping up a head of water in the canal. On

the whole, a first impression of Castelnaudary is not promising for a prolonged sojourn—a quaint spot for half an hour, an enforced residence appals me. The Cassoulet Toulousain as cooked at the village inn is a revelation. Indeed, this delectable stew of sausage and mutton cutlets reveals the little hill town in a more favourable light.”

On Monday I repaired to Carcassonne, to visit a bank and get some photographs developed. As ever, Monsieur Jordy, of the Hôtel de la Cité, received me like an old friend and attended to my bodily needs.

Carcassonne is situated on the River Aude. The lower town on the left bank of the river was a bastide built in the days of St. Louis, a kind of garden city laid out to attract colonists. Towering above the right bank of the Aude the ancient *cité* is still surrounded by a double wall armed with round and square towers; these battlements and the distant peaks of the Pyrenees silhouetted against the sky form a most imposing monument to the Age of Chivalry. At sunset I met mule-carts entering the ancient *cité* through the Narbonne Gate laden with tubs of grapes; since dawn the small-holders of the old town had been busy with the vintage. Down on the banks of the Aude is the modern town, throbbing with the twentieth century, the cinema and a banjo champion in a huge café with red plush settees. The garish lights are in strange contrast with the moonlight on the battlements of the *cité* above.

On returning to *Sylvabelle II* at Castelnaudary, I found our chance of getting through on the morrow as far off as ever. On Tuesday, October 9, I walked down to the canal to interview the engineer at the lock under repair. I found the lock and the next reach empty of water. The old wooden lock gates everywhere are being replaced by iron ones. It takes a week to repair each gate, for no mechanical tools are employed, even the pumping being done by hand. The workmen travel up and down the canal with their gear on horse-drawn barges; they had a formidable array of sheer-legs, derricks, jacks, etc., but all was done by hand, although I have seen dredgers on the canal with motor-pumps. There are engineers in charge of sections of the canal, with assistants who ride up and down the banks on bicycles. Most of the workmen were sturdy-looking Basques, splashing about in gum-boots; one old fellow supplied a vivid note of colour, with a sky-blue waistcoat over a scarlet shirt and a canary sash.

On the following morning we passed through the locks at Castelnaudary, and moved down to the scene of operations, so as to be ready to get through as soon as the locks were opened for service. There were several barges waiting, their crew placidly fishing in the canal. The weather was very hot, and we lounged about in the shade, enjoying the peace and quiet of our rural existence, until we were at length liberated, and continued our voyage. By noon on Saturday, October 13, we had got through

the traffic block, and passed Carcassonne, after a hearty greeting from the jovial lock-keeper.

It was Saturday, and the weekly wine market was in progress ; near the lock, which is in front of the station, was a vast park of light cars—Citroens for the most part. So important is the wine market that the banks keep open on Saturday afternoon and close on Monday morning, as many a tourist has found to his sorrow. Known as *Blanquette de Limoux*, the wine—both red and white—is excellent as consumed locally, but I doubt if it would travel to England, though some we had on board was quite good when Menton was reached. The canal runs between the foothills of the Pyrenees and the *Montagnes Noires*, cousins of the *Cevennes*. Trebes might be a village in the wilds of Catalonia with a square tower, brown rolling uplands, and highland landscape. Trebes, Brams, Homps are rough, sturdy, honest names, like the places and their inhabitants, although a trifle uncouth perhaps.

We ran on until night overtook us at Marseillette Lock and tied up at the foot of the first olive grove, denoting that we had at last entered the Mediterranean belt, for as Pliny remarked, the olive cannot grow more than fifty miles from the shores of the Mediterranean. During the night several barges passed our romantic anchorage. They were anxious to clear the next lock down, as it was due for repair. Barges travelling at night carry acetylene head-lamps, there is much shouting and cracking of whips

in the darkness—a novel and picturesque navigation.

Though it was Sunday morning, we found the repair gang at St. Martin's Lock waiting for their barge, which we knew to be many miles astern of us, and told them so. We left them sitting in the sun, smoking cigarettes and waiting patiently for the arrival of their sheer-legs and gear. We passed several very Spanish villages, notably Puicheric, where Corentin nearly had a rib cracked with a broken sluice crank which took charge. A day of brilliant sunshine disclosed a radiant Southern landscape, stunted groves of grey-green olive trees, long screens of cypresses to keep the wind off the canal, and everywhere vineyards, goats, and dark-eyed damsels washing linen in the canal.

After Homps, where we stopped to buy bread and petrol, we had a run of fifty kilometres without a lock. So many were the hairpin bends along the meandering canal that we could not "let her out"; indeed we had to reverse on one occasion to get her round at all. We took farewell of the snow-clad Pyrenees, and ran all day through vineyards tended by Spanish labourers. There were many anglers on the bank—both men and women—and every now and again off would go a gun to let us know that we were in the country of Tartarin de Tarascon, that intrepid Nimrod. One fellow scorched along the towpath on a "motor-bike" with a gun slung across his back and a pack of yelping curs tearing along behind, literally *ventre à terre*.



Photo by Underwood.

CARCASSONNE FROM THE RIVER AUDE.

After passing through a short tunnel, we found ourselves at nightfall, at the top of the ladder of seven locks outside Béziers. Being after four, it was contrary to the regulations to descend, so we arranged to get through at daylight on the morrow and walked down to the town for dinner at the Station Hotel, returning aboard by taxi. Monday, October 15, saw us very early astir to negotiate the seven locks; we faced these cheerfully, for to-day we hoped to finish with the hateful contraptions and get on to salt water once more. By eight we had cleared the ladder and two more locks, and ran along a very smelly factory reach until clear of Béziers. Here we entered the marshes that border the Gulf of Lyons; there were acres of green fen, fishermen living in houseboats, and kingfishers darting among the rushes. We sighted Agde Lighthouse on the summit of an extinct volcano, and passed through the triple-gated circular lock of Agde. This is a quaint old place, with a great church tower, a place of fen and marsh and many tiny waterways. A cutting led from the circular lock to the River Hérault. Here we passed a woodman in a flat-bottomed skiff and a wild-fowler in a primitive gunning-punt that would make Colonel Peter Hawker turn in his grave. On the banks were gipsies making baskets; a dredger was at work near some well-kept houseboats. At Bagnas, with a cheer, we passed out of the last lock into a cutting which took us past many fishermen with nets across the canal, to Les Onglous. Here ends the juris-

diction of the canal authorities ; there are just a couple of red-roofed houses, a clump of umbrella pines, a cluster of barges, and an inquisitive official. At the end of the cutting we sighted the blue water of the Thau Lagoon, and beyond the white lighthouse a blue haze covered the distant mountains. Once more we were back on the blue Mediterranean.

CHAPTER III

Back to Provence

THE Thau Lagoon, which separates Les Onglous, the canal terminus, from the Mediterranean at Cette, provides a very pleasant introduction to the Latin Lake. Its name is derived from the Latin for "bull" and tradition has it that a monster bull, probably a hippopotamus, was wont to rise from the lagoon on certain occasions. Near by, the church of Saintes Maries de la Mer contains a stone (cheek by jowl with relics of Mary Jacobi and Mary Salomé) upon which bulls were sacrificed to Mithras, god of light and sun. Bulls are to this day reared in the neighbourhood and play an important part in the lives of the inhabitants of Camargue, the Pampas of the Rhone Delta. The Church of Saintes Maries and its pilgrimages of cowboys and gipsies to the tomb of Sarah, the black servant of the Sister of the Virgin, provides an interesting instance of the way in which Christianity has been grafted on to paganism on the shores of the Mediterranean, the cradle of Civilization.

But let us get to sea. Last year I found the lagoon storm-tossed; to-day the sun beats down on an unbroken surface of topaz, dotted with little

black double-ended flat-bottomed punts, not unlike cod dories. There is a light southerly air, and these mosquito craft have set their white triangular lateen sails. They are whiffing for bass (called *loup* in Provence in contrast with *bar* in the Atlantic) and enhance the exotic note of the seascape with their sea-gull's-wing effect. A flight of wild duck pass overhead; before us, half hidden in blue haze, lies the Mount St. Clair above Cette. A small yacht under canvas changes her course to take a look at us, and we pass a motor barge with lateen sail set, making for Les Onglous; she is loaded with petrol and paraffin from the depot at Balaruc, which we can see right ahead. Near Cette we find oyster dredges being worked between two rowing boats, also mussel dredges (rakes and nets combined) from punts. A narrow waterway connects the lagoon with the seaport of Cette; on its shores are primitive fishermen's dwellings with punts moored to stakes at their doors. This is very foreign, and as typical of the south as anything to be found in the whole expanse of the Mediterranean. The lagoon is flooded with light more fierce than that of the Atlantic. One misses the ever-changing light and shade that shed such an atmosphere of mystery over the Atlantic. In the region of the Mediterranean the light is primitive and crude like the passions of its inhabitants.

Passing under several bridges we entered Cette Harbour. Along the quays were several Spanish and Italian steamers in company with the *Jolly George* of Liverpool. So low was the last bridge that

we had to wait for it to be opened, and in the company of a flotilla of red-funnelled tugs and barges we took up our berth of last year, but the berthing master moved us off as a steamer was expected from Algeria with wine to mix with the local brand.

On the quay we found a fish market in progress ; baskets of red-mullet, cuttle-fish, dogfish and whiting for sale. The tunny boats were putting to sea to shoot their nets for the night's fishing as the larger ox-trawlers were coming in, the boys out on the end of the yard furling the huge lateen sails. Viewed from the white breakwater the Latin lake of the poets presented a picturesque and animated scene in the last rays of the setting sun. Beating out against the southerly breeze the tunny boats with white lateen sails resembled a flock of sea-gulls winging out to sea. As the sun set the blue of the sea changed to red, and one by one the black mussel-punts glided in like phantoms from the lake. In the gloaming we met many a swarthy young mariner with his pretty Mediterranean maid to remind us of the Greek origin of Cete.

On the morning of Tuesday, October 16, we went to the outer harbour and berthed alongside the *Eros*, once the floating palace of Baron de Rothschild and now a laid-up cargo-boat. The caretaker was a friend of Corentin's from Brittany, and with the aid of the *Eros*'s davits we hoisted our masts into position, and spent the day setting up the rigging, bending sails, cleaning and tuning up the engine ready for our long run across the Gulf of Lyons to Marseilles.

October 17.—“ As the morning steals upon the night, melting the darkness ” (*The Tempest*), we clear the harbour and

“ Cette with its glistening houses white,
Curves with the curving beach away
To where the lighthouse beacons bright,
Far in the bay.”

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

It was a morning for the poets—sunshine and blue water. We met many returning tunny boats and overhauled the outgoing trawlers while we skimmed over the unruffled surface of the “ Latin Lake ” in exemplary style on petrol—our engine would hear nothing of paraffin until we had twice changed the jet—a case of temperature or atmosphere. What time we were changing jets a light north-west air came off the land and we made all sail.

By ten the engine was running like the proverbial clock, and never stopped until we tied up in the Vieux Port at Marseilles. Off Grau du Roi, the fishing harbour of Aigues Mortes, whence St. Louis sailed for the Crusades, we sighted two of the four Baudouin-engined trawlers of that port, in company with several lateen-rigged craft, that might have been a division of the thirty-eight vessels that sailed for the Holy Land in 1248. Inland we could see quite plainly the Tower of Constance, built by St. Louis for a lighthouse and landmark to guide his fleet home.

After passing Espiguette Point we skirted the low dunes of that mysterious region the Vaccarès

lagoon of the Rhone Delta, a country of reed-fringed waterways, the home of flamingos and other exotic wild-fowl, sand-dunes and tamarisk, vast plains, where cowboys tend herds of cattle on a breed of horses dating from the Saracen invasion. This is the Camargue, of bull-fights held in remote villages, the land sung of by the Provençal poet Mistral. Soon we sighted the wireless station and huge church of Saintes Maries de la Mer, where gipsies forgather in pilgrimage on the tomb of Sarah, servant of Mary Salomé. When cruising on the Italian coast last spring I met, near San Remo, a caravan of over a hundred Hungarian gipsies on their way to Saintes Maries de la Mer for the pilgrimage, and one wonders how they keep up the tradition and find their way across Europe. Looming up right ahead as though rising from the midst of the sea is Beauduc Lighthouse. In reality this light is on terra firma, but it is a low coast of sand-dunes lost in mirage and heat haze. Passing from blue water to yellow we enter the turbid waters of the Rhone, aided by a brisk off-shore breeze. It is very hot, the skyline brass, and the sun, without pity, forces me to shed garment after garment, until, clad only in a pair of diminutive "shorts," I present a somewhat piratical appearance. Off the Faraman Light we sight two steam-trawlers fishing ox-fashion. We notice the strong set of the current seaward out of the Rhone, and keep a course well inshore for the high land of Carro, with two wrecked steamers to warn the unwary.

The night cheers us with the loom of the Planier

to starboard and the wonderful lights of the Vieux Port entrance dead ahead. On leaving Cette we had set a compass course due east, and with a little give and take this had brought us right home to the very foot of the Cannebière, the heart of Marseilles, where East meets West with a vengeance.

How delightful to awake and look out on to the good old harbour ! The very houses seem to beam at us with a benign smile of welcome. What a welter of craft, from the haughty S.Y. *Finlandia* to a mere racing-dinghy ! We are berthed alongside Count Bentinck's Dutch barge-yacht *Islania* next to the French schooner *Sabot de Venus*. It is a veritable nautical museum. There are many mosquito motor craft, with every conceivable kind of engine, excursion boats, yachts, tenders and sea-urchin fishers. The whole scene, ships and their sailors, are dominated by the church of Notre Dame de la Garde, radiant in the southern sunshine.

Our next port is Toulon, easily reached for lunch. Toulon is apt to be hastily condemned by the Briton, who is harassed by touts what time he seeks the Orient boat bound for the shiny East, with empty pockets and leave expired. But to the idler it has vast prospects, with shady fountains, pretty girls looking in shop windows, quaint old fishwives tending oyster stalls, and baskets of multi-coloured flowers. A variety of small craft pick up a living about the vast land-locked harbour ; most of whom have motors, although the small tanned lateen sail has been

retained in many cases for delectation of the man with the sketch-book.

In autumn it is well to take advantage of all the fine weather the Fates send one, so that after a few days' absence in Paris I determined to continue the cruise. The sun beat down from a cloudless sky as I elbowed my way through the jostling crowd of jack tars and pretty lasses that filled the narrow streets of old Toulon. Down at the Quai Cronstadt were the usual gay throngs of idlers, with much coming and going of naval pinnaces, and the sinister silhouette of the Mediterranean Squadron in the offing. The sea is level with the street, so that one could almost drive a taxi-cab aboard of a battleship or a bowsprit through a shop window.

Once aboard we were soon under way, past fussy launches and the grey forms of warships across the blue, blue harbour out through the boom openings. Soon lighthouses and gun-towers were well astern, and the gay town dissolved into a yellow splash against the mountain-side crowned with forts, where Napoleon won his spurs against Hood. A couple of destroyers and three torpedo fry passed us as we left this wonderful land-locked harbour. Outside we encountered a slight swell raised by a light easterly breeze. One by one we overhauled the quaint lateen-rigged trawlers of Toulon. We were bound for the *Iles d'Or*, the Golden Isles of Hyères. Composed of three main islands, Porquerolles, Port Cros, and Levant, the Hyères group are among the most beautiful islands of Europe. Our course was set

across the azure Mediterranean to the headland at the extremity of the Giens Peninsula. A Semaphore station crowns the bluff, towering above the salt marsh and lagoons joining the mainland. This is Escampobariou Point, the scene of the most thrilling incidents in Joseph Conrad's book, *The Rover*. If proof were ever needed that Conrad had navigated the Mediterranean, we have it in the fact that he knows Escampobariou, a spot in evil repute with *tartane* skippers, fishermen and other Provençal mariners. To-day it is innocent enough and we passed through "the capsizer of casks" (as its name implies in Provençal) without a qualm. A *tartane* that might have sailed out of the pages of Conrad was sighted beating up against the foul east wind, and we passed a three-masted schooner enjoying the fair breeze for Marseilles; in the offing, a black smirch of smoke betrayed a steamer bound for Genoa.

Overhauling a small fishing-boat with a multitude of tiny tanned lateen sails set on sprits, we drew into Porquerolles Island. On the western extremity is a brown circular blockhouse that surely found its way into *Treasure Island* when R. L. S. was staying at Hyères. A breakwater runs out from the lovely wooded shores. We passed hard by a sandy promontory, where a girl is seen rising like Aphrodite from the surf, her shapely limbs glistening in the sunshine as she runs up the beach. It was noon and we tied up to the quay for lunch. Astern of us was a Government tug, and we could hear the chaff of the Breton crew.

After lunch we took a stroll ashore, past sundry small boats hauled out on the sands, to a vast square, where the inevitable game of bowls was in progress beneath the palms. On a hill, above a yellow church with a crooked cross, stands the circular fort of Saint Agatha, dating from the sixteenth century. During the blockade of Toulon these forts were used to keep at bay landing-parties from the British fleet. A shady walk leads past delightful villas gay with mimosa, rose and geraniums tucked away in groves of palm and tall eucalyptus.

Porquerolles was one of the islands known to the ancients as the Stoechades on account of its sweet-scented lavender, *Lavandula Stoechas*, and a little fishing port on the mainland is called to this day "Le Lavandou" for the same reason. On the shore of a lovely creek, set among umbrella pines, vines, and tamarisk, we found a red-roofed farm-house with fishing-boats at a wooden jetty. Floating across the blue waters of the tiny bay one heard the note of a mandoline and the provoking lilt of a love-song rendered by a dark-eyed maid among the pines. Aphrodite of this morning?

Palms and mimosa, love-sick maidens swimming in a sapphire sea, this is an enchanted isle transported from the Southern Pacific. It is time to go, and like the great-hearted Odysseus we set sail "over the broad back of the wine dark deep" bound for the haven of Pothuau at Les Salins d'Hyères. Between twin stone piers we entered a miniature harbour packed with craft of all kinds and conditions, from submarines to rowing-boats.

There are a score of picturesque lateen-rigged fishing-boats moored to wooden stakes. Two wild-fowlers with guns strapped across their backs watch us from the shade of a quaint cottage. We berthed between two smacks, and for once our choice met with the approval of the harbour-master. Our fishermen neighbours took a great interest in *Sylvabelle II*. On the port side they were busy about a magneto off their 16 h.p Aster, similar to the one I had last year in *Sylvabelle I*. Most of these smacks have motors—Baudouin or Aster for the most part, although three boats are fitted with 30-h.p. White lorry engines bought from American Army stock at Marseilles. One of them, *Le Vengeur*, is sister ship to *Le Voltigeur*, which I knew at Cavalaire some years back. Our Bettus-Loire engine was much admired and I heard news of various seafaring friends up and down the coast and was presented with a curious shell. Last year an English barge-yacht, probably *Thoma*, put in and caused a sensation with her lee-boards; when we displayed the lee-boards fitted to our dinghy and explained how they enabled her to turn windward, another sensation was caused. These smacks at Les Salins de Hyères are about 30 feet long; they are built at Toulon or St. Tropez. Engines are used in light weather or for getting in and out of port. They carry on trawling and *langouste* fishing, with nets and pots; *bouillabaisse* fish are also caught, and a shellfish called violet. Half a sea-urchin, half a chestnut, this prickly Provençal delicacy is much in favour at Marseilles in these days of expensive oysters.

Wire is bound round the head ropes of the trawls instead of the usual chain, and wooden hand windlasses are employed to heave up the net. Ashore are salt marshes and a boat-builder's yard. A canal running down from the marshes is roofed over, and here the barges await the steamers that lie off in the roads to load the salt. The whole place is very picturesque and southern, men standing about with guns, nets drying in the sun, long yards on stumpy masts, low sheds and cottages with tiny gardens bright with flowers.

CHAPTER IV

On the Coast of the Maures

ON the last morning in October I determined to ramble on along the coast. *Sylvabelle II*, as yet, had not seen Menton, her home port in the Mediterranean. There was no wind and the sun shone down from a cloudless sky. The fishing-fleet was at sea, but the harbour was crowded with M.L's and other naval small fry, so that we had some difficulty in extricating ourselves from the inner recesses of the little port. Outside we found a steam yacht flying the blue ensign, and, to our disgust, a rapidly freshening east wind. Though this was a dead muzzler I was loth to turn back into the maze of warps and mooring-buoys. It was now ninety-three and quite a steep little lop was rolling in. All day this short head sea retarded our progress, though so fine a sea-boat is *Sylvabelle II* that we never had a drop of water on deck all day. Very alluring were the islands, dove grey in the easterly haze. Several of our friends the fishing-boats were overhauled, their tanned lateen sails being more picturesque than effective on such a day. Off Point de l'Argentière we sighted the lead-mines of Bormettes right down by the

sea. Before reaching Cap Blanc we passed one of the most picturesque and least-often-visited castles of the Riviera. This is Fort Breganson. A lofty island crowned with the ancient château rises from the blue sea, a kind of Provençal Bass Rock. The island is now joined to the mainland by a causeway some hundred yards long. Though the present fort was built by Vauban, Breganson was a Greek colony called Pergantium; it is mentioned by Stephen of Byzantium. In this same bay were the ancient cities of Olbia and Pomponiana mentioned by Strabo and Pliny, and there were probably more white villas dotted along the coast than there are to-day. Cap Blanc proved quite an imposing bluff with Cap Benet hard by. We now opened out the long green range of the forest-clad Maures stretching away to Cape Lardier. A few lateen-sailed small craft were sighted off Lavandou, a white fishing-village on a beach with the hoary city of Bormes topping the hill above. Bormes is a quaint old hill-town much frequented by artists. The inhabitants are very typical of Provence; they live a happy sunny life perched up in this ancient brown townlet above the blue Mediterranean. Many of them are mighty hunters of wild boar. The boars come down from the cork forests and *maquis* to batten on the vines. Lavandou is the port of Bormes; indeed, were Lavandou in Italy she would not be known by this sweet-smelling name but answer to the more nautical appellation of Bormes-Marina. Le Lavandou is a place of sun-tanned fisher-folk and dark-eyed,

semi-Moorish lasses whose bare legs are as brown as the nets they spread out to dry on the fore-shore. In the harbour—a mere stone spur runs out from the beach—are a few motor-smacks that work the grounds about the Golden Isles.

As we thrashed along the wooded coast of the Maures I began to tire of pounding against the easterly swell and decided to put into my old haunt Cavalaire. Early in the afternoon we moored up in the little harbour at the foot of the Maures.

In the winter of 1919-20 and 1920-1 I spent some delightful days afloat in Cavalaire Bay. As I had no craft of my own I was obliged to hire, and spent no little time endeavouring to tempt the Cavalaire fishermen away from their interminable game of bowls and the delights of the grog-shop. Many a morning did I spend, up at dawn, out on the little stone jetty, stamping up and down in my sea-boots, waiting for fishermen who never turned up. Finally, one Bordasse hired me his boat together with his distinguished services. The boat, *Voilà Bordasse*, was of the usual double-ended local type, but carried a jib and leg-of-mutton main and mizzen, something like a south-west coast-crabber. Decked in fore and aft, with broad waterways, she was steered with tiller-lines, amidship. Alas! Bordasse was but a sorry sailor, and we soon dissolved partnership. The only outing worth mentioning was a day's long lining off Pardigon, in Cavalaire Bay, when we shot half a mile of



THE FOREST-CLAD SLOPES OF THE MAURES MOUNTAINS.



A LOCK ON THE CANAL DU MIDI FROM THE DECK OF
SYLVABELLE II.

hooks and caught enough rockling and wrasse for a *bowillabaisse*.

It was one Sunday, late in April, 1921, that I heard of *Spahi*, a quaint piece of marine bric-à-brac belonging to a one-eyed Italian named Nicol. Built at St. Tropez in 1882, *Spahi* was a heavily tarred, 12-foot boat nearly as broad as she was long. Reminiscent of the craft designed by story-book illustrators for *Robinson Crusoe* or *Sindbad the Sailor*, she wallowed in the sunshine beneath the pines on the sandy shore at the foot of the château. After many delays and disappointments, *Spahi* was pushed into the sea over some greased planks, and proceeded to leak abominably; nor during my experience of her did she ever "take up." Hoisting the tattered, cumbersome lateen sail, I reached out on to the blue waters of Cavalaire Bay. With the tiller gripped in my right hand, holding the sheet in my left, I beat in the face of the west wind, tack after tack along the lofty, wooded shore towards Lavandou. Joy was in my heart, for at last I had found a boat which would show me this beautiful coast.

On the occasion of my second outing in *Spahi* I took with me a novice to the sea, a silk merchant of Lyons, who worked his passage by plying most manfully such a wooden scoop as is used for baling by the Dutchmen on the Zuyder Zee, but which appeared incongruous on the Mediterranean. I took my companion hand-lining for what we could catch. Letting go the grapnel in a *calanque* or rock-bound cove, we

baited with squid, a gift from Nicol, and in two hours caught, between us, a sea bream, alike both in colour and size to a five-franc piece. Evening was then upon us, but pull devil, pull baker, nothing would induce the fiendish grapnel to leave the fond embrace of some dear mermaid at the bottom of the cove, despite the fact that I had taken a turn round one of the flukes. Rather than awake fear in the tender bosom of my landlady, I tore up a bottom board to serve as a buoy and sailed home, leaving the best bower to be salved by Nicol at his leisure.

Spahi was my first experience of a lateen sail. To borrow from the racing-stable, the rig may be described as "by dipping lug out of sprit," though in reality it is, I believe, the father and mother of both, having been the rig used by the Phœnicians. It is a lofty, cumbersome sail, pressing in a breeze, and dangerous to the unwary. On a stout, stumpy mast is hoisted a long yard, of which the fore end is sweated down by a tackle until it touches the deck right forward at the stem head. The after-end of this yard stabs up into the sky, the triangular sail being controlled by a sheet leading through a block in the stern sheets. It is a "great little" sail in light weather, but in a breeze gives one overmuch to think about, and the first day I met a mistral in *Spahi* I had plenty to do. When running before the wind the tackle on the fore end of the yard is slacked away, and a guy bent to the end of the yard and made fast aft, the result being a square sail as effective as it is

picturesque. In a calm, the sail is brailed up round the yard, which is left aloft. The great drawback to the lateen sail in a small boat such as *Spahi* is the great length of yard, making it impossible to row unless it is left aloft, or about half of its length allowed to protrude from the bow. Many of the new fishing-boats at St. Tropez are fitting a jib and loose-footed mainsail, as a rule very badly cut.

I had not been long at Cavalaire before I discovered a rock-bound pine-clad cove, called in Provençal *calanque*, sheltered by lofty cliffs from the cold mistral but open to the health-giving southern sunlit sea. Between the mainland and an outlying reef of brown rocks were deep pools of crystal water ranging in colour from sapphire to emerald, such shades as never knew the painter's palette. These pools were walled with sea-moss; it is not seaweed in our northern sense of the word, but moss, yellow, pink and mulberry in colour. Above were graceful umbrella pines, shedding their welcome shade over the multi-hued wrasses and rocklings, which, with tiny crabs, winkles, limpets and sea-urchins inhabit this marine paradise.

In one pool, some twelve feet in depth, I could see, swirling in the crystal-clear water, a striped wrasse, an exquisite study in blue and gold. My old friend *Labrus mixtus* had donned a more gorgeous coat than that which he is wont to wear in waters farther north. I sat down to watch this pretty fish disporting himself in the clear pool. What impressed me from the begin-

ning about this wrasse was his habit of coming right up to the surface, for I had always looked upon the wrasse as a fish who routed about among the rocks at the bottom of the sea, darting out, occasionally, to seize a passing pollock bait that one had allowed to sink near the bottom when slowing down to turn the boat or light a pipe. This fish, however, was rising like a trout.

Eight of the following morning found me at the pool, armed for the fray. Down from a cloudless sky shone the sun, but an occasional wave breaking over the barrier reef ruffled the mirror-like surface of the water. I baited a tiny hook with a winkle, and cast it out on the finest of gut, just as a wave broke into the pool. Nothing happened. . . . For a week I persevered, until, from constant breakages among the rocks, my slender stock of small hooks was expended. Looking through my fly-book I selected an "Alexandra" and baited it with a winkle; a composite lure I subsequently christened "Alexandrinkle." Ten minutes later that wrasse was mine. Like most fish, he had shrunk from a stately leviathan to a disappointing sprat upon leaving his native element, and turned the scale at two hundred grammes, which sounds more consequential than "half a pound." From this same pool, on the same lure, I landed several similar striped wrasses, a quantity of goldsinnies (*Crenilabrus carnubicus*), some small bream, and a few members of the Cottidæ.

I soon tired of rock fishing. From frequent

inspection of other people's catches I came to the conclusion that only the smallest of rock fishes are to be caught within a mile or so of the shore, which, I believe, is the real explanation of the *bouillabaisse*. The inhabitants of Toulon and Marseilles, Nice and Cannes are very enthusiastic fishermen, and as the fish they catch are very small and full of bones they make them into soup. There are many sea-fishing clubs along the coast, and competitions are held after the style of the British Sea Angler's Society at Deal. Articles on sea fishing are published in *Le Petit Marseillais*, *L'Eclaireur de Nice*, etc. Bait is on sale at the tackle shops in the towns; in fact I used to arrange with one of the guards of the Sud France Railway to bring me hermit crabs from a shop in Toulon. On Sunday morning the coast from Marseilles to Menton is peppered with fishermen squatting on every little rock and wielding enormous rods. As I have already stated, I grew tired of this "sport," and it was thus with great satisfaction that I combined forces with a sporting village blacksmith whose keenness with the gun I had already experienced. He wanted a boat, which I could supply, while he provided a "spiller" or long line which had been given him by a nautical friend. It was five of the clock, of a Whit-Sunday morning, when my brawny friend of the anvil, his apprentice and I, shoved off in my boat *Spahi*. The sea was a flat calm, a natural phenomenon described by the Provençal as *bonasse*. Armed with an enormous trident,

on the end of a 16-foot pole, the smith began to spear cuttle-fish. Once provided with a good supply of squid, I pulled seaward, out round Cape Cavalaire, for the sea was so *bonasse* that sailing was out of the question. What time I plied the oars, my friend the smith, with his mate, cut up the squid or cuttle-fish, and baited the gross of hooks, quarrelling fiercely in Provençal at each other's alleged clumsiness. An hour later we shot our line across the beautiful bay of Bonporteau.

From the land, Bonporteau Cove forms a natural theatre, with sand for the stage, and sea, sky, and the Golden Isles of Hyères as a backcloth, with an audience of cork trees and pines. A delightful sun-baked cove, in which to dream away an afternoon, or a heaven-sent bathing-place to the more vigorous, its sands trodden by many a faun and many a nymph from our northern isles. I was now glad to observe this land of enchantment from the sea, and found it more lovely than ever in the still morning atmosphere. The smith relieved me at the oars, and, propelled by his brawny arms, we soon reached a large rock, fifty yards off the pine-clad cliffs. Here we landed to hunt for crabs, holding a piece of squid in front of a hole in the rocks until a greedy crab caught hold of it, to be pulled out willy-nilly. The apprentice then began scraping limpets off the rocks with his clasp-knife, with which he and his master supplemented a breakfast of bread and wine. We then put to sea once more in my boat, anchor-

ing a few yards off the rock. For a couple of hours we fished on the bottom with crab bait, catching a few diminutive wrasses and small bream.

It was now time to haul our line. At first, hook after hook sailed up through the clear water without a sign of a fish. Provençal oaths and long faces greeted these empty hooks. Soon, however, there was a change for the better, and by the time the last hook was aboard, a couple of score of wrasses and conners (*Crenilabrus melops*) lay expiring on the bottom boards. Taking advantage of a welcome westerly breeze that began to make a coy appearance, I unfurled the sail, and squared away for home and a Whit-Sunday *bouillabaisse*.

Another amusing pastime for anglers that may be practised at Cavalaire is fishing for murry. While rarely found in British waters the muræna, or murry (*Muræna helena*), is quite common in the Mediterranean, and visitors to the Riviera may spend many an amusing hour in the pursuit of this exotic eel. In colour the muræna, or murry (the French call him *murène*), is a lightish brown, shading to purple, with yellow markings. The muræna is more thick set, more stocky than his cousin, the conger, being less of an eel and more of a fish. The jaws are as strong as those of a conger, and armed with teeth as sharp as a needle. Like cousin conger, the muræna has his home among the rocks, but is to be found in quite shallow water.

To catch the muræna all that is required is a walking-stick, half a yard of stout line, and a

small conger hook. Bait your hook with a hermit crab, called in the Provençal tongue of the Riviera *piade*, but in academic French *Bernard l'Hermite*. Lash one end of the line to the end of the stick and the other to the hook. Then come down with me to the rocky foreshore, dangle your bait in front of that likely looking hole between two stones, and wait. Soon we shall catch a *muræna*. In the beautiful Bay of Cavalaire, between Hyères and St. Raphael, the cracks and the crevasses at the base of the half-demolished breakwater (which looks like a Roman ruin, but is not) are very prolific of *muræna*. It is the custom at Cavalaire to place half a dozen sticks in position before different choice holes. Then, Provençal fashion, having smoked a couple of pipes in the sun, the fisher or trapper saunters along and collects the bag at his leisure. Great care should be taken in handling the *muræna*, as his teeth can inflict a severe wound. This is no "bogey" talk, but the actual experience of seeing a friend's finger bitten to the bone.

It was very pleasant to sit on deck and smoke one's pipe till sunset, thinking over the pleasant happenings that I have just related. In the evening I went ashore and looked up some of the village worthies and dined at the hotel.

On the following morning I awoke as soon as it was light. The glass showed no intention of rising or falling. After all, a few days more or less did not matter much, and I determined to stay on at Cavalaire rather than waste more

fuel against what would probably be the same head-wind. As the yacht was rocked slowly from side to side by the wavelets of Cavalaire Bay I could see through the port hole, every second roll, a flat-topped hill which the map called Mont Jean. Having read somewhere that the ancient Ligurians built their fort on the summit of hills having a flat top or plateau, I decided to stretch my legs ashore. In the village I could find no one who had actually been to the top of the Mont Jean, but an ancient in the *bureau de tabac* described the path and had a tale of a Roman camp—all ruins are Roman in the mind of the Riviera peasant.

At first the way led through pine-woods along the east bank of a pleasant valley. After a steep climb I came to what is called in Provence an *aire*—a junction of several paths. Remembering the directions I had received at the *bureau de tabac* I chose a path to the right, and when I had walked for ten minutes round the head of a deep glen I knew that I was in the right track, for I came upon a giant cork tree, worthy of Windsor Forest—a southern Hern's Oak. It was a rougher walk than most in the Maures Mountains, especially the scramble up from the last *charbonnière* on to the "col," the path being a dry water-course hidden by undergrowth. The *charbonnières* are platforms of beaten earth shored up with baulks of timber upon which the charcoal-burners ply their trade, camping in brushwood shelters hard by.

During my ascent I encountered two groups of

charcoal burners pushing primitive sledges piled high with timber. Their rough appearance was enhanced by the guns they wore strapped across their backs as a protection against the wild boar that infest the *maquis* of the hill-side. It was late spring and this *maquis*, which one is wont to associate only with Corsica, was at its best. Shoulder high was the Mediterranean heath whose root supplies us with briar pipes, sweet was the lavender, and gay the azaleas. Soon, however, I was above the *maquis*, and the landscape would have been described by Shakespeare as "a blasted heath," so great is the havoc wrought by the forest fires of summer and the wintry blasts of the mistral. My way was strewn with fallen timber, green undergrowth was growing up beneath the charred scrub and blackened pines. Finally the path vanished, and I was compelled to blaze a trail for myself until I came upon the first wall of the fort. This scaled, I met a second wall, and clambered on to a cairn in the north-east corner to feast the eye and cool the mind on the towering wall of the distant, snowy Alps.

Of the fort nothing remained but two semi-circular walls of loose flat stones innocent of cement and reminiscent of the stone walls of the Cumberland Fells. Lizards, squirrels and butterflies formed the only garrison. I could find no trace of any well or cistern, though water the garrison must have had, for this was a final refuge of the original inhabitants of the coast; here, at the sight of a hostile sail, they would

hasten, driving before them, up the steep hill-side, their flock of goats. Very broad were the walls, assisted, here and there, by steep granite crags; trees and luxuriant undergrowth were everywhere. On the north side I found traces of recent excavations.

Sitting up there on the lichen-clad stones in the great silence of the hills with all the Maures country at my feet like a relief map, my thoughts were lost in a maze of speculation as to the date of the foundation of the fort and the appearance of the builders. It was a primitive stronghold but mighty enduring; the Ligurian sappers were masters of their craft. These Castellares, as the elliptical stone forts are called, are almost the only remains we have of the Ligurians of ancient times; there are some beehive dwellings near Thorenc, in the Maritime Alps, but of anything in the nature of artistic relics I know nothing.

This was the first of several shore excursions at Cavalaire. After a lazy day aboard I set out to explore the Fenouiller glen and the path which leads over to La Mole in the valley beyond. Half an hour's march along the Hyères road brought me to the bridge at the foot of Le Dattier hill, where I turned off and followed a path that ran along a dancing, merry burn. Sometimes the path ran in the burn itself; it was one of those dear eccentric paths that cross and re-cross the stream every dozen yards. In the course of time it led me through pine woods, past cork oaks, among giant heather, wild laven-

der, iris, and azaleas, to a charcoal-burner's hut of bracken. Here I pulled out my kodak and forded the burn. In midstream I perceived an eel—no, a snake, a little khaki-coloured snake with black markings. I always kill snakes on principle, whether venomous or otherwise. This fellow gave me a run. He curled up in the water and pretended he was a stone lying at the bottom of the pool. It was an interesting nature study in "camouflage," but I speared him with my stick and away he went down the stream. Steeper became the path as, leaving the burn, it began to climb up among a cork wood at the head of the glen. Purple Emperors, Camberwell Beauties, swallow-tails, clouded yellows, blues and fritillaries flitted to and fro. The sound of a goat-bell and the chopping of wood reached my ears; I emerged from the wood, and found myself standing quite suddenly in a meadow before a small cottage, flanked by oaks and chestnut trees of noble girth, and a gigantic fig tree, second, in my experience, only to that of Roscoff, in Brittany. While I was getting my breath and forming first impressions, a large hound rushed out of the house, bent on my destruction. His master, an amiable grey-beard, followed with proper apologies, and informed me that he was a voluntary exile from Cogolin. This was a bitter disappointment, for I had hoped that at last I had met one of the old inhabitants of the Maures, born and bred on his *bastide*. The old fellow, if not a native, was very proud of Le Fenouiller, and gave me a great account

of his chestnuts, which he vowed were second to none, not excepting those of La Garde-Freinet. His was the only inhabited house of what had once been a mountain hamlet. Here had thrived a contented people, self-contained, living their own lives away from that world which proved an irresistible attraction to their children, who have flocked to the towns, leaving the roofs to fall in on their homes. A ruinous well vied with a dilapidated bake-house and an overgrown, unkempt vineyard, to complete this picture of the decay of country life. The old man cultivated as much as he could, and left the rest to nature.

Above the hamlet I found two paths running east and west, each leading over a "col," one to La Mole, the other to Le Canadel. I followed the latter, and was rewarded by a magnificent view of the wooded, irridented coast of the Maures, Le Canadel, Cavalière, Capes Nègre and Blanc, and in the background, Cap Sicié and Toulon, whilst seaward, steeped in sunlight, lay the Golden Isles. A pleasant hour was spent beneath the pines, enjoying the view, the air and sunshine, the azure sea, the green, waving trees, and the gambols of the squirrels. Then I retraced my steps, explored a charming path which leads through the pines down to La Mole, and finally made my way home to Cavalaire, and a well-earned dinner.

My next walk was to Les Collières, a hamlet among the foothills of the Maures. At first the track skirted a pine-clad slope, and then,

having led me through a trim vineyard, plunged into a pretty southern wood, where groves of olive trees and cork oaks held their own with pines and firs. To my mind there is something very lovable about a cork oak, quite apart from its decorative value ; it always sets my thoughts running on buoys for nets or crab pots ; I think of crabs and lobsters, or else my mind runs on that long cork which the *sommelier* shows one on the end of a corkscrew when one orders " a bottle of the best." The track then climbed a steep slope in a couple of loops, and round a bend I found myself face to face with Les Collières, a group of plain houses, washing tanks, wells and green spaces, dominated by the encircling wall of the Maures. Away up the eastern slope of the valley, a charcoal-burner was plying his trade. I inquired the way of a pretty, dark-eyed Italian girl washing linen in a *bassin*. The lilt of love song and the sweet ripple of a mandoline came from behind the closed shutter of an upper room in the big white farm-house. It was as though some impresario had shown us Southern Europe on a stage.

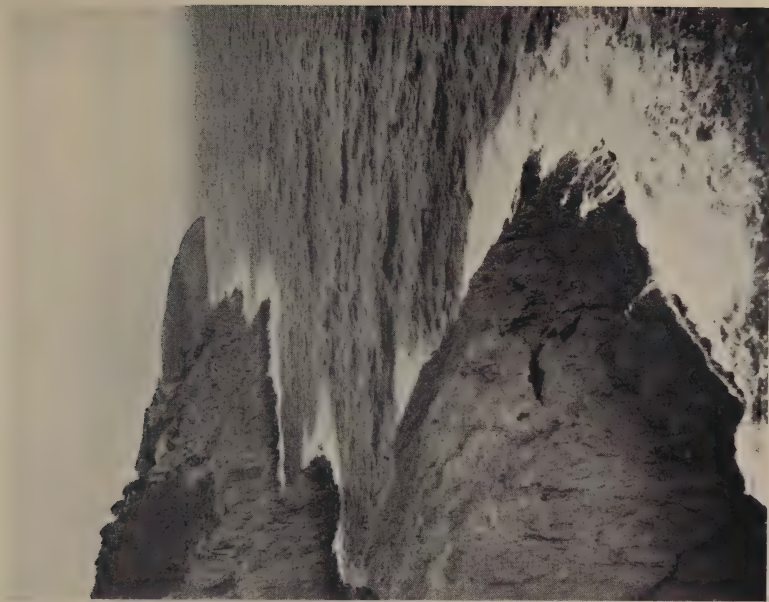
Lest something should occur to break the spell, and the exquisite pleasure I had obtained be lost, I hastened on my way, climbed westward, out of the valley, past the aforementioned charcoal-burner's camp, where happy, dirty children were teasing a sleepy granny, nodding under a magenta kerchief beneath the noon sun. Over a " col " I went, and down into the next valley beneath the frowning Mont-Jean,

skirted a big farmhouse, drank greedily from a streamlet, climbed over another "col" through a wood of firs and cork oaks, descended into a thickly wooded glen, drank greedily again from another streamlet, a merry little bubbling burn, ate a hunk of bread and cheese, smoked a pipe, such a pipe! and jogged home down the glen.

CHAPTER V

Along the Esterel to Cannes and the Lerins Isles

SO fascinating were the mountain rambles and stalks with old cronies at Cavalaire that *Sylvabelle II* lay for a week in the pretty little haven. The sandy shores of the bay and the pine-woods stretching to the skyline looked very alluring when we at last got under way. This bay found great favour in the sight of the ancient navigators, Phœnicians, Greeks, and Romans; coins and pottery have been dug up on the site of the settlement of Heraklia Caccabaria. In the tenth century the Moors occupied the coast, with head-quarters so far inland as La Garde-Freinet, until driven off by Count William of Provence in 973. It cannot be repeated too often that the word "Maures" has nothing to do with the Moors, but is a Provençal word meaning "black"; we might therefore call "Les Montagnes des Maures" "The Black Mountains" if we were not afraid of confusing them with "The Black Forest," the Black Sea or Blackheath. The dense pine forests certainly make the coast of the Maures appear black in comparison with the rest of the coast of



THE COAST OF THE ESTEREL, NEAR CANNES.



THE MONKS' CASTLE ON ST. HONORAT ISLAND, OFF CANNES.

Provence. In 1536 the Emperor Charles V sailed into the bay with his fleet during the invasion of Provence. Probably the first Englishman to land at Cavalaire was Arthur Young. At six in the morning of September 12, 1789, just under two months after the storming of the Bastille, Arthur Young sailed out of Toulon in a barque commanded by Captain Jassoires of Antibes and landed the same night at Cavalaire. "Landed at night at Cavalaire which I expected to have found a little town, but it consists only of three houses, and a more wretched place not to be imagined." It should be borne in mind that Arthur Young saw only with the eyes of a farmer and was disgusted with the lack of cultivated land and the sombre aspect of the pine-clad hills.

Off Cape Lardier we met our old enemy the easterly swell, though the morning had promised fine enough on leaving Cavalaire. We overhauled a *Balancelle* with her ludicrous sprit-foresail contraption. Ashore I could spy a brown village set in vineyards high among the hills. This is the walled Moorish village of La Ramatuelle, a quaint relic of the Middle Ages well worth the climb. There are narrow streets of shattered houses and a group of dark-eyed maidens chatting beneath an elm planted under the guidance of the great Sully. On a neighbouring summit is another Moorish village, Gassin, less romantic perhaps than Ramatuelle but with a grand view across the blue waters of the Gulf of Saint Tropez to the distant snow-clad Alps beyond the

Italian frontier. These villages were perched high up to escape the raids of the Barbary pirates, which resulted in slavery in the galley or the harem for those who lingered by the seashore.

I had half a mind to put into Sainte Maxime or Saint Tropez, but it was early in the afternoon and I was well acquainted with both these ports, so decided to carry on to Cannes. Saint Tropez is considered to have been the Roman harbour of Sinus Sambracitanus, and hard were the galleys hauled out at night in accordance with the Roman custom. Every year in May a kind of Carnival is held at Saint Tropez to celebrate the defeat of a Spanish fleet in 1637. The din of trumpets, rockets, squibs, and maroons is deafening, and the little wine port is a place to be avoided on that day.

I now made up my mind to give up all idea of reaching Cannes that night and set a course for Saint Raphael. This place is at the foot of the Esterel Range on the shore of the Gulf of Fréjus. A Roman Portsmouth, Fréjus is now silted up and over a mile inland. A considerable stream, the Argens comes down from the hills through a marsh to a sandy beach, making one of the few haunts of wild fowl along this coast. Fréjus is a decayed old town of flies and Roman relics. Here and there a tuft of wallflower or geraniums makes a note of colour against the grey of the ruined aqueduct. A nut-brown maid of Phœnician type with a basket of fish on her head and a gipsy boy with a performing bear find a place

in my note-book along with the cathedral and the somewhat unconvincing Roman arena. An interesting relic of the Roman naval harbour is called the Lantern of Augustus, though it was probably a "leading mark" and not a light, though some think it was the Harbour Master's Office, if the Romans were plagued with such folk.

A grand sunset of gold and orange ushered us into Saint Raphael Harbour. The Byzantine Church of Nôtre Dame de la Victoire combined with the lateen yards of the wind-bound *tartanes* gave an exotic air to the harbour. Ashore on the Place Coulet is a Pyramid in memory of the landing of Napoleon I on his return from the Egyptian Campaign of 1799. In addition to the *tartanes*, the harbour contained a number of small undecked sailing-boats and a couple of Government M.L.'s. We spent a very lively night. About midnight, a swell set in, with a deal of backwash from the beach close to the harbour mouth. All sorts of small craft crashed into us and we rolled heavily till daylight. We were outside by seven and found a heavy, lumpy sullen swell and east wind right in our teeth. Agay was passed and the beautiful red shores of the Esterel followed until we sighted, right ahead, the low green Lerins. By ten we were off Cannes, having taken three hours over a normal two hours' run. I made up my mind to waste no more fuel pounding along against head sea and wind, so into Cannes we went and took up a berth stern on to the Albert Edouard Pier

alongside of a great three-masted steam schooner *La Resolue*, belonging to Monsieur Lebaudy, the Sugar King. Cannes as usual was gay with yachts, British, French and American, sail, motor and steam of all rigs, shapes and sizes. Most of them were laid up or in charge of watchmen, for the winter season had not yet begun.

It will be news to many folk that the first regatta was held at Cannes as long ago as 1859, forty-seven years after the foundation of the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes, and twenty-five years after the "discovery" of Cannes by Lord Brougham. The construction of the harbour as early as 1838 undoubtedly had much to do with the choice of Cannes for a yachting centre, though it would always have found favour on account of its sheltered position behind the natural breakwater formed by the Lerins Isles. Such is the prestige of the old yachting days of Cannes that the Cercle Nautique is not only the oldest club on the Riviera, but the most popular, though a close examination would probably disclose the sad fact that some of the members have never steered a yacht. Some of the old-time regattas were very sporting events. The first race of the "Prix des Dames" was sailed in 1866. The entries consisted of two British, one French and one Russian yacht, Mr. John Richardson's 140-ton schooner *Gleam* carrying off the cup. In 1866 the Duke of Abercorn brought out a specially-built boat from Oxford, and despite his weight and fifty-five years was with difficulty dissuaded

from rowing "stroke." The Oxford-built boat won by $1\frac{1}{2}$ lengths from the French men-of-war galleys over a three-mile course. One could add to many red-letter days.

Besides racing, Cannes and the coast of the Esterel have always been in favour with yachtsmen as a cruising ground. In the "good old days" it was customary to land on the red rocks of the Esterel and proceed inland in pursuit of wild boar, what time the crew prepared a succulent *bouillabaisse* in some shady cove. Along the wooded shores of the *Montagnes des Maures*, westward of the Esterel, there are plenty of wild boar to this day, and only a few months ago a fisherman of Saint Tropez caught a *sanglier* in his net. The sea fish of the Riviera do not provide the yachtsman with much sport. But the chief attraction of Cannes is the little group of islands called the Lerins. On Saint Honorat, the outer island, is a monastery and a most picturesque castle to which the monks used to retire for defence against the Barbary pirates. This monastery was a great seat of learning in the Middle Ages, being founded by St. Honorat in 375; amongst those who studied here was St. Patrick, who, of course, drove all the snakes off the island. Sainte Marguerite, the inshore island, is famous for having been the prison of the Man in the Iron Mask. These green shady isles make a pleasant sail across from Cannes and are full of interest to the historian and archæologist.

From Cannes we brought *Sylvabelle II* in

four hours round Cape Antibes, across the Bay of Angels, past Cape Ferrat and Monaco to Menton, where moorings were laid down for the winter.

CHAPTER VI

A Winter Cruise in the Gulf of Genoa

(February 1924)

THIS is rather more of a winter's tale than most accounts of Riviera cruising ; sapphire seas and sun-kissed shores for once give way to snow-clad hills and flights of wild fowl.

All over Europe severe weather reigned throughout the winter of 1923-4, and the Riviera felt the chills of winter, although in a lesser degree. Had I not had a very good reason, I should not have chosen the month of February for a cruise in the Gulf of Genoa. For the first time since the Great War the Regio Yacht Club Italiano announced a most interesting regatta at Genoa in February, and it was to see this regatta, and in particular the sporting "sixes" compete for La Coppa d'Italia, that I went to Genoa. I had another reason—perhaps the real one—to see how *Sylvabelle II* would behave herself in the notoriously stormy waters of the Gulf of Genoa in winter.

I had arranged to sail in company with some of the French yachts which were going to Genoa to race, but in view of the bad weather they

were taken in tow. On Wednesday, February 13, it blew hard from the east and set up such a sea at Menton that the French gunboat postponed her departure until the morning of Thursday, when she left Menton with the two 8-metre yachts *Aile II* and *Aile III* in tow, against a heavy easterly swell. These yachts were the property of the well-known French helmswoman, Madame Heriot, who, in spite of the cold and rough weather, went the whole way to Genoa with her maid aboard *Aile III*.

Detained at Menton by the social amenities of the Riviera season, I did not sail until 12.30 noon on Friday, February 15. All night the glass had been rising, although the sky was unpromising and the swell rolling in from the east broke over the breakwater with an ominous crash as we put to sea. We said good-bye to France and passed the triangles that mark the limit of the waters of each nation at the Saint Louis stream. Off the point of La Mortola we found the swell steeper and steeper, and congratulated ourselves on having the dinghy lashed on deck—not our own boat, but the little dinghy kindly lent us by the owner of *Sylvabelle I*. In spite of our anxiety about making a good passage I was able to admire the fine villa and beautiful park laid out on La Mortola Point by the late Sir Thomas Hanbury. The old Roman road runs through the grounds, and one paints mental pictures of the emperors, popes, generals and other celebrities who have passed along this lovely shore bent on the making of history. While I

was ruminating on such matters an easterly air made itself felt and rapidly increased to a nice sailing breeze, had it not been a dead muzzler for us. We were very unlucky with our winds this season and never put to sea without encountering a head wind. How truly does Conrad remark: "In the polity of winds, as amongst the tribes of the earth, the real struggle lies between east and west." In his amusing account of a Riviera cruise—*Sur l'Eau*—Guy de Maupassant describes the everlasting discussions of his two paid hands as to the probability of east or west wind. We now have a head wind and a steep short swell against us, and we thrash along across the Bay of Ventimiglia and button our jackets at the sight of the snow-clad mountains up the Roya Valley. Rounding Cape Ampeglio and dusty old Bordighera we decide to give up all thought of making Porto Maurizio or Oneglia, and set the mainsail, bound for San Remo. Abreast of Ospedaletti the wind freshens and we lower the mainsail to enable us to weather Cape Nero.

As is the case along all the shores of the Mediterranean, Ospedaletti has an interesting history. Here the Knights Hospitallers of Rhodes founded a lazaret for leprous Crusaders, and the village on the top of Cape Nero is still called Col di Rodi. Rounding this cape in the wake of the Crusaders, as it were, we hoisted the mainsail again and made fair progress to San Remo. We were both relieved to be in shelter after pounding along into the head seas, although we were as dry as tinder and had never even thought of

oilskins, taking not a drop of water on deck. Instead of the usual two hours, we had made the passage from Menton to San Remo in three, proving how right we were to put into that port rather than waste fuel in persevering against a head wind.

So soon as we had rounded the end of the break-water we selected a berth astern of a steamer, under the lee of the sea wall near a small trading schooner, and a boat put off to us with a very ancient mariner and a very diminutive boy, who beckoned us to this very berth. Having let go our anchor we gave the old man our stern fasts to take ashore ; in fact, we moored up in the usual Mediterranean style. When we had got all snug an Italian bluejacket came off in the same boat and asked our name and destination, to which I replied in my best Italian that we had put in for the night on the way to the International Regatta at Genoa. Our visitor, who was very polite and patient with my imperfect handling of the tongue of Dante, instructed us to report in the morning to the Capitaneria (harbour master's office) with our papers if we did not sail before eight, reminding us that Italian time was an hour ahead of French time. I then went ashore for a stroll, and over a cocktail watched young Italy dancing to an excellent band at the Casino.

I was awakened the next morning at 2 a.m. by heavy squalls of rain, although the glass was still rising. An hour later the steamer sailed and I fell asleep until daylight, when I sent Corentin ashore to take a look seaward from the top of the

sea wall. He soon returned aboard and reported a westerly wind, light but a fair wind, although the same sullen swell was on tap. Postponing breakfast I hurried into some sweaters and we got under way. The rain had stopped, but it was very cold; the swell had subsided a little, and setting all sail before the fair westerly breeze we swallowed our coffee and rum in fair fettle. After rounding Cape Verde we found the seas steeper and more troublesome and the west wind began to lose heart. As I was admiring the quaint old sea fort that guarded San Stefano al Mare from the raids of pirates and corsairs the engine began to lose power, and it was discovered that the after-cylinder had gone out of business owing to the plug oiling up. *Sylvabelle II* was steepplechasing over a short steep sea, which explained the oiling up of this after-plug. The west wind still held and there was even an indication of sunshine away astern in France, but we were not to profit by it.

After passing a tug, struggling along towards France in charge of a string of barges, we sighted the imposing town of Porto Maurizio. There are few more typically Italian-looking towns as seen from the sea than Porto Maurizio. Just as on crossing the Bidassoa River Fuenterrabia, although the first town the traveller meets is the most typically Spanish of all Spain, so on this, the very threshold of Italy, we find a town of an *italianissimo* aspect. Vast white and yellow buildings, domes, cupolas and campaniles crown a hill of southern buildings rising from a harbour

full of lateen-rigged coasters, fishing craft, with an odd steamer and a green-hulled topsail schooner or so. A tug is towing a barge seaward, there are harbour works in progress, and a scene of no little commercial activity both here and at the twin port of Oneglia. There is much more seafaring along the Italian Riviera than is seen in France. The sea is a tradition with these dwellers along the coast of Liguria, they are of the old stock of Genoese navigators—Antoniotto da Noli, Leon Pancaldo and Christopher Columbus. They handle their boats well, they take pride in them and their calling ; in fact, one sees at once that this coast breeds a good race of seamen. Ashore at Oneglia was born Andrea Doria, "Il Padre della Patria," a famous sea captain who served under both Francis I of France and the Emperor Charles V, led the united fleets of Venice, Spain and the Pope against the galleys of Barbarossa, and in spite of all his adventures died in his bed at the age of 94 !

Although the weather was grey and cold the next bay was full of charm. We had finished with the interminable terraces of flowers which, although very beautiful from above, look very dull from the sea. In a green valley lay Diano Marina. This is a new village built to replace the Diano which was entirely destroyed by the earthquake of 1887. Several villas are springing up ; there are, in fact, many signs that this place has caught on with British visitors in search of a quiet winter resort and for whom the larger towns have no attractions. /

On the bluff right ahead of us stood the imposing townlet of Cervo, which also suffered in the earthquake, and is interesting to sea-lovers from the fact that almost the whole of the male population were drowned in a gale during an attempt to obtain sufficient coral to pay for the new façade of the church. This coral fishery is now a thing of the past, and it is with difficulty that one can imagine the veritable fleets of Genoese and other small craft that from spring to autumn carried on coral-fishing up and down the coast a century ago. The most reputed banks of coral were at Cassis, near Marseilles. To-day there is still a certain amount of coral-fishing in the Bay of Naples, off the coasts of Sicily, and the Balearic Islands. The coral is still there, but the demand for it is so small that the market value has dropped until it is not worth the fishing. In the next valley, that of Andora, the rivulet of Merula trickles down to the sea. I should not have mentioned it but for two things—first, it is referred to by Pliny ; second, it is spanned by a very charming Roman bridge. From our deck we could see another trace of the Romans : a very picturesque aqueduct which is still used by the Italian peasants for irrigating their land.

The wind now dropped and off Cape Mele began to head us off. On rounding this cape we found ourselves confronted with our old antagonist, the east wind ; moreover it was raining and the hills were shrouded in snow. Right ahead, across a wide bay, we could discern, veiled in a snow-cloud, the loom of that huge bluff, Cape Noli,

for which a course was set outside of Gallinaria Island. The cold was now intense, and I took my lunch in the engine-room, revelling in the warm reek of the paraffin. Cape Mele has a yellow lighthouse instead of the familiar white ; it is the western portal of the Gulf of Genoa and a landfall for vessels making that port. As ill-famed as the Gulf of Lyons the Gulf of Genoa is a turbulent stretch of water, with very little shelter. After leaving Oneglia there is no harbour before Savona, a stretch of thirty miles, and nothing between Savona and Genoa, another odd twenty miles. These distances do not sound much to one accustomed to the weather in the Channel, where the glass gives good indication of a coming blow ; but in the Mediterranean, owing, I think, to the presence of the Alps, Apennines and Pyrenees, the absence of tide, etc., the changes of weather are so sudden that in less than an hour one can find oneself in a nasty pickle. One wonders how the old-time mariners got on when there was no other shelter but an occasional creek provided by Nature between, say, Genoa and Marseilles, and hauling out was the order of the day. How could one haul out with the sea breaking on a lee shore ? They must often have bided at sea, hove to, or run before it miles out of their course. I think there was very little navigation in winter, even within the memory of living man ; most of the *tartanes* laid up during the winter, and the Neapolitans would never put to sea during the proverbially stormy month of March, made doubly treacherous by the equinox.

The older *tartane* men to-day are full of information about natural shelter, and it was from one of these old fellows that I learned of the Island of Gallinaria which we were now approaching. This islet, shaped like a snail, provides shelter from the inshore weather, although precautions should be taken here, as everywhere along this inhospitable shore, against a sudden shift of wind into the north. A spell of east wind is often followed by a sudden shift, generally about 2 a.m., into the north or north-east, when very violent squalls come off the snow mountains without the slightest warning. This is the dread tramontana, the Genoese equivalent of the Gulf of Lyons mistral (which of course blows from the north-west). The island takes its name from the fact that it was formerly the haunt of wild fowl, a southern Bass Rock. Formerly the island belonged to the Dominicans, but in 1866 the abbot sold it to Signor Gastaldi, whose castle may be seen on the summit of the rock. St. Martin of Tours is said to have lived in a cave on the island for a year. The chapel, which is plainly visible from the sea, was built in memory of St. Hilary, who, like St. Patrick, drove all the snakes off the island. On the Lerins off Cannes we find the same legend of snakes. In reality the snakes were people evilly disposed to Christianity, who were evicted by the proselytizing saint. Ashore of Gallinaria Island lies the delightful winter resort and summer bathing station of Alassio, one of the nicest little towns on the whole Riviera. Here, and at the neighbouring

village of Laigueglia, a number of large beach boats carry on mackerel and other inshore fishing from spring until winter. The whole of this pretty bay between Capes Mele and Noli is fringed with good hard sand, and the hills are blessed with most luxuriant vegetation; in fact the coast is not unlike that of the Maures between Hyères and Saint Tropez.

In the bight of the bay we can plainly see the vermilion towers and campaniles of the old Roman city of Albenga. Like Fréjus, Albenga has silted up, the River Centa having changed its bed and the sea receded. Where once were moored Roman galleys, dark-eyed Italian lasses tend asparagus beds for the delectation of the winter visitor's palate. It is difficult to believe that this town, now devoid of any shelter, was once the Ligurian naval port of Albium Ingaunum, and sent thirty-two galleys to fight the Romans, and aided Hannibal against the same foe, to whom it eventually submitted.

Cape Noli was rounded in a fierce squall of bitterly cold sleet, so that we had not much time or pleasure at the sight of this fine headland. The discoverer of the Cape Verde Islands, Antonio da Noli, took his name from the adjacent town.

The mountains were entirely cloaked in clouds, so that we might have been cruising off the West Highlands rather than the Riviera. Off Vado Head we found a couple of rowing boats working a mullet seine in the surf right on the top of the rocks. The Italian fishermen are more hard-working and painstaking than their Provençal brethren,

and a distinguished Italian admiral assures me that these waters are much overfished.

I now summed up the situation—head swell, head wind, only two hours of daylight left, raining hard, and miserably cold—so I decided to relinquish all hope of making Genoa, and put into Savona for the night. Passing a veritable knackers' yard of vessels of all sorts, shapes and sizes, moored off Vado for breaking up, we pushed on across the bay towards some tall factory chimneys that indicated Savona. Cold sleet came off the mountains in a solid screen, so that I had to slow down, being unable to see for the rain in my face. It was a bitter North Sea afternoon. Like most Mediterranean ports, Savona keeps the entrance to her harbour tucked away on the eastern side of the town. After rounding a number of half-finished arms and breakwaters, we passed into the inner harbour with the aid of an excellent plan in a little book I heartily commend to all who follow in my wake along the coast of Italy—the Liguria volume of the Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano. Even if the reader is ignorant of the Italian language, the maps and plans are invaluable. Having passed a number of small steamers and coasting schooners, we finally let go within a biscuit toss of the Pancaldo Tower. We were ably assisted by a dear old man with long hair and ringlets protruding from a black tam-o'-shanter, who put off in a boat to take our stern fasts ashore. Our berth was snug and land-locked, no roll and no wind. Near us were a few *tartanes* and fishing-boats, their crews partaking

of a frugal meal under an awning of sails rigged on oars. Their teeth were chattering from cold, and we gathered that such weather was altogether unusual and by no means to the local taste. They evidently thought we were quite mad to go cruising about in such weather. It was carnival time, and scores of youngsters were rushing about the old arcaded streets as I made my way up the Via Paleocapa to a well-earned dinner of hot broth, macaroni, roast beef and cheese in a quaint vaulted *ristorante*. In Italy the fare is plainer than in France and fewer dishes are served, although it is customary to pile the plates high with "bumper" helpings. Savona is essentially a working town, being the port of Turin and the valley of the Po, the Lancashire of Italy. Its chief glory is the clock tower on the quay, in memory of Leon Pancaldo, who piloted Magellan's expedition in 1520.

It was cold enough for the Straits of Magellan, and I was mighty glad to seek the shelter of my warm little cabin. One could feel the bite of snow, and an icy draught swept the arcaded streets. Although heated only by an oil lamp, my little saloon was very snug. This is one of the chief pleasures in foreign cruising—that one is independent of hotels and their expensive discomforts. After a final pipe and such a night-cap as the circumstances warranted, I looked with pleasure on a rising glass and turned in full of hope for the morrow.

Soundly did I sleep until wakened by Corentin's cheery hail. The sun was shining brightly from

a cloudless sky, the glass had risen and the wind was off the shore—a tramontana. Sunday, February 17, seemed full of promise, and hastily swallowing our breakfast coffee, we started up the engine, cast off the stern fasts and proceeded to heave short, but found our mud-hook had fouled something, probably some antiquated mooring dating from the time of the good Pancaldo. By dint of going ahead and astern we shook the obstacle free, up came the anchor ensign of hope, and we motored joyously out of the harbour, past a picturesque little green schooner and a few fishing-boats. A bitter wind was blowing down in fierce squalls from the snow-clad mountains; at first I thought we had made a mistake and were enjoying winter sports in the high Alps rather than yachting on the Riviera. But gone was that violent head-swell of yesterday; the off-shore wind, this tramontana or mistral of the Gulf of Genoa, had put down the sea for us, rolled it out with the force of a steam-roller, even if it did make us find frequent excuses for a trip to the engine-room. Soon the sun was strong enough to prove a staunch ally, and the sea was of its old-time sapphire complexion. We set all sail to the tramontana and went bowling along gleefully, past smiling hamlets of pink and white houses with campaniles and cupolas raking above ancient streets. Here and there, among the pines and palm-trees, a substantial villa crowned a rocky promontory, and 'twixt sapphire sea and sapphire sky rose the foot-hills of the Alps, radiant beneath their cloak of virgin snow.

As we proceeded the breeze freshened with the sun until, for the first time in her existence, *Sylvabelle II* had her lee-rail awash. Relieved of jib and mizzen she bowled along the merrier until we opened up a gap in the hills at Voltri, when squall after squall came off the mountains with sledge-hammer blows. I took all sail off her and motored in under cover of the shore. Voltri is proverbial with the Genoese for its ill humour in a tramontana, and reminded me of the reputation of Escampobarious between Toulon and Hyères which has recently been brought into prominence by Joseph Conrad in *The Rover*.

Solemnly, like a stately goddess of antiquity, there arose from the haze before us a slender tower, the lighthouse of Genoa, La Lanterna. This is one of the most ancient sites of a lighthouse. The actual tower is said to date from 1543; it is reminiscent of the beautiful Cordouan Lighthouse at the entrance of the Gironde, and is typical of "Genova La Superba" as the Italians call their leading seaport. We now had the wind abaft the beam, and hoisted the mainsail to carry on past fishing craft and prosperous suburbs, with ships on the stocks, arriving off the entrance to Genoa Harbour just in time to see *Mebi*, the Italian "six," beat *Gardenia*, the French challenger, in the first round for the Coppa d'Italia.

It had been a delightful morning's run over Savona, and we were kindly given a berth with the other yachts off the premises of the Genoa Rowing Club at the Molo Giano, free from the usual worries of a great port.

One of the world's great seaports, Genoa is more homely than either of her Latin sisters Barcelona or Marseilles, and although a vast harbour and a huge city the place is so contrived that from the harbour one cannot see the city, nor the harbour from the city. Had it not been for the kindness of the Genoa Rowing Club in allowing us to use their private landing I do not know where we should have found a suitable berth in this great harbour. The variety of craft was surprising: there were huge steamers laid up, including a P. & O., some fine Italian liners in commission, colliers, fussy tugs and picturesque little schooners.

We were left in peace by the Customs as far as the ship was concerned, although landing a portmanteau containing my wife's kit was a more complicated affair. We were told that it must be taken to the Customs office on the other side of the harbour. The harbour is wide, the dinghy small, and the portmanteau of no mean dimensions; so that I finally arranged with an elderly waterman to take me with my vexatious burden to the *dogana* in his ample wherry.

Tall, gaunt, but very wiry in spite of his age, the waterman sculled along, standing up and facing the bow, his long white hair hanging in ringlets over his collar, a fine old type of Genoese mariner. There is an ancient guild of watermen and berthing-masters at Genoa, while the dock porters of the bonded storehouses have a union dating from 1340 and counted the father of Paganini among their number.

It will be seen that Genoa, as befits a venerable

seaport of the cradle of civilization, is a city of traditions. The Bank of Genoa is three centuries older than the Bank of England. England got her patron saint, St. George, from Genoa in the following manner: St. George was the patron saint of Genoa; Genoa supplied Richard Cœur de Lion with a fleet of eighty galleys to take him to the Crusades, in return for which and as a compliment to Genoa he adopted St. George as his patron saint.

CHAPTER VII

In the Gulf of Rapallo

COME down to the Mole Giano and let us continue our cruise, along the Riviera of the Rising Sun to the Gulf of Rapallo. Although the hills round the city are shrouded in snow the weather is perhaps a trifle warmer. The wind is still the tramontana, but of a more moderate brand, and above all the sun is still shining. By ten o'clock we have got our anchor up and motor out of the harbour past groups of small fishing-boats and a couple of coasting schooners out beyond the Lido d'Albaro. Here the Regio Yacht Club Italiano, that most sporting and hospitable body, hold their regattas, and already some of the yachts are collecting for the day's racing. Right ahead looms a magnificent promontory, an Italian Bolt Head, almost purple in the morning light. Quite smooth is the sea, and as we proceed down the coast towards the south-east the tramontana seems gently to die away, the sun shines with increased glory, while ashore the landscape becomes gay with foliage and villas dotted about amongst the palms and cypresses, and we seem to emerge from the Scandinavia of snow-bound Genoa to a land more in keeping

with the popular conception of Italy. Nor is the sea devoid of shipping, as is so often the case along the French Riviera; here and there we perceive the smoke of a steamer bound out of Genoa or heading from Spezzia farther down the coast, while most welcome sight of all is a sailing ship in the offing apparently making all sail for Genoa, and we can see a tug fussing out to meet her. The sunshine and sea are so entrancing that I decide to stop the engine and proceed under canvas for a while. There is not much of the off-shore breeze left, but we make fair progress before it is all consumed by the sun. Smoking a pipe on the cabin-top and gazing up at the blue heavens, the bitter weather and hard seas of last week are an incredible nightmare. We are now off Nervi, the first resort on the Levantine Riviera, once a beautiful sun-trap amidst olive yards and orange groves now much built over. Camogli and Recco, farther east in the bight of the bay, are fishing villages much more congenial to the mariner than international Nervi.

“Camogli . . . a perfect miniature of a primitive seafaring town, the saltiest, roughest, most piratical little place that ever was seen, and everywhere there is a smell of fish, and seaweed, and old rope.”—CHARLES DICKENS.

We now pass through a little fleet of trawlers from Camogli. They are craft after the style, rig and size of the lateen-rigged ox-trawler of Cette, and they fish in the same manner, towing a trawl between two boats. The idea of this

form of fishing is that the waters of the Mediterranean are so deep that in light weather one boat would not be sufficient to tow the net, hence it is harnessed to two boats and dragged along as by a yoke of oxen: whence the name *baou*, *bœuf* or ox-trawling. We watch two boats head to wind laboriously getting their net in by hand, sheer force of brawn and muscle.

These lateen craft always compose well and this morning a flight of giant sea-gulls seemed to be skimming over the summer sea in the shadow of the great purple headland of Portofino.

After almost dying away the wind now hauled ahead so that our faithful Bettus-Loire was started up once more and we ran on towards the cape. As we drew near, the wealth and beauty of the vegetation became apparent and recalled the *maquis* of the Maures Mountains. Giant heath arbutus, cypresses and umbrella pines combined to make us feel that at last we were in southern climes. Beneath the headland there was no wind whatever, and we remembered our Tennyson.

“Mariner, mariner, furl your sails,
For here are the blissful downs and dales
And the spangle dances in bight and bay.”

We now pass in full view of one of the most romantic spots in a land of romance, the tiny fishing hamlet and chapel of San Fruttuoso, nestling at the water's edge, at the foot of the giant cliffs of the promontory. This spot has a legend concerning a dragon and the martyrdom of St.

Fructuosus, but is chiefly remarkable for the fact that here the members of the great Doria family were brought by sea for burial in the chapel vaults. A tower hard by the chapel was erected by the great admiral Andrew Doria (whom we met at Oneglia) to protect the last resting-place of his family from the onslaughts of the corsairs and pirates he had so often engaged in battle. It was a very suitable burial-ground for a race of seamen, this beautiful cove on the most lovely coast of the whole Mediterranean.

To add to the picturesque we overhaul a little two-masted trading lugger with a large red pattern, a disc, on her sails, similar to that seen in the Adriatic, and now almost a thing of the past in the Gulf of Genoa. Her crew are partaking of a frugal meal on deck, munching bread and probably raw fish, for the Genoese sailors say that fish loses its flavour when cooked and must be eaten raw ; this, of course, only applies to little fish of the whitebait and sprat variety.

Some beautiful villas are now seen rising above gardens of palms, mimosa and cypresses ; and on the rock-bound promontory we find a lighthouse set in a beautiful frame of foliage, and open up the bay of Rapallo or Gulf of Tigulia. Right ahead lies a port which one who had not consulted the chart would suppose to be Portofino ; in reality, this is Santa Margherita Ligure. So tucked away in a landlocked fiord is Portofino that one cannot see the village at all from the sea, and it is only on following round the coast-line that one perceives the entrance to the most

perfect natural harbour on the whole coast since leaving the shadow of the Pyrenees.

Not only is Portofino a perfect anchorage from the nautical point of view, but it is surely one of the most lovely little spots in the wide, wide world. At first we were not quite sure of ourselves, for the chart was not very clear. What time I looked up the map in the Italian Touring Club guide-book we slowed down ; turning a bend we saw a stone pier right ahead, some craft moored, and an old fellow pulling off to us in a boat. Ashore on the starboard hand were tall houses at the water's edge, with a wealth of archways and arcades in true Latin style. Above the village and on the port hand the hill-sides were clad in olive yards and lemon groves, cypresses, mimosa, camelias and orange gardens.

Under the direction of the ancient mariner we tie up to the little stone pier ; whence, round a final curve, we can see a little square flanked with quaint buildings, boats hauled up a beach in the foreground and with the church against a background of green hill-side, sapphire sea and sapphire sky—the real Italy of romance.

Rambles ashore soon confirmed my first impression that Portofino is the most delightful yachting station on either the French or the Italian Riviera. There is a choice of beautiful walks round the promontory or among the olive gardens overlooking the blue waters of the Gulf of Tigulia. The village provides a wealth of material for the sketch-book, while many a pleasant hour may be spent on deck in quiet contemplation of the

beautiful scene. During our stay at Portofino I had the satisfaction of seeing this wonderful little place by moonlight, looking down upon it from the top of the hill, a sight I shall not easily forget.

At Portofino and other harbours on the Gulf of Tigulia it is customary for the fishermen to take out tourists for short trips and several of the men have bought outboard motors for their little craft.

Most of the inhabitants of Portofino are fishermen and one wonders how they earn enough to live on, although it is true that their wives make lace, which they sell to tourists at fancy prices. It is an interesting fact that in many places where fishing is bad the men's wives take up lace-making—Ireland, Brittany and Italy, to mention three countries. At Portofino the lace is made on pillows, and the old ladies and young girls seem equally quick and skilful.

From Portofino I made day trips to the other ports of the Gulf of Tigulia, Santa Margherita Ligure and Rapallo, returning each night to Portofino. The shores of this vast gulf are very beautiful and well wooded, with pretty villas dotted about among the olive yards and orange gardens.

Santa Margherita has considerable charm for the cruising man, not only on account of its beautiful surroundings, roomy and secure anchorage, but for the variety of local craft to be found in the harbour. There are the usual green-hulled trading schooners, a couple of small

steamers, fishing-boats and *tartanes*. Several of the latter are laid over on their beam ends for careening. This operation always appeals to my northern eyes as an unusual and romantic performance, which reminds me of much youthful reading of books for boys dealing with the adventures of corsairs and pirates. These desperadoes, it will be remembered, always put into desert islands, to refit, careen and carouse what time the pirate chief, usually minus an eye, arm or leg, buried his ill-gotten gains. At Santa Margherita you may witness careening in full swing, the local shipwright alongside on a raft wielding his caulking mallet in the southern sunshine while the crew, under an improvised tent on the foreshore, play cards and drink wine from pipkins. The seaman's tippie here is always red wine; white wine in Italy is considered beneath the dignity of men, and fit only for the weaker sex; the seamen of the Mediterranean prefer a rich, thick, red, almost black wine. Little fishes, eaten raw with bread and olives, are their staple diet, although they are partial to salads and are gluttons for tomatoes, a queer contrast to the bacon and tinned salmon of the north!

These were the fisher-folk beloved of Shelley, and it was only a few miles farther south at Lerici that the poet found his death, in just such a picturesque lateen-rigged craft as the *tartane* alongside. A more unsuitable craft for poets or a more treacherous climate in which to learn the rudiments of seamanship can hardly be

imagined. In one of Shelley's pockets was found a volume of Sophocles, and in the other a copy of Keats doubled back at the "Eve of St. Agnes" as if hastily thrust away, when Shelley, absorbed in reading, was suddenly aroused by the bursting squall.

Ashore, Santa Margherita has some pretty nooks among the olive-clad slopes, while the pretty little dark-eyed girls, making lace or mending nets, form charming groups with bare-legged fisher-lads about the boats hauled up on the foreshore.

Skirting a coast thick with villas among luxuriant greenery, we come to Rapallo, the capital of the Levantine Riviera. This is rather an open anchorage and much less attractive to the yacht-owner than Portofino. The surroundings are of considerable beauty however: the great blue bay with the Portofino promontory on the one hand, the wooded coast sweeping away to Chiavari on the other, with a background of snow-clad Apennines. There are some quaint arcaded streets, and on the beach a most picturesque castle rises from the sea, for Rapallo was once an independent republic with a fleet of galleys of its own. It is probable that the sea has receded at Rapallo since the Middle Ages, for at present there is not much shelter for a fleet of galleys, although it is true that these were probably hauled out each night after the manner of the Romans. The mariners of Rapallo were famous fighters, and on more than one occasion rendered material assistance to their neighbours, the Genoese. To-

day there are a few fishing craft and some out-board motor-boats for trips round the gulf, but most of the shipping goes to Santa Margherita.

There would appear to be more fish in Rapallo Bay than at other places along the coast, and I saw a nice catch of mullet and bass landed from one of the boats, and some red mullet and big wrasses from another.

I was told that sardines, anchovies, mackerel, bream and dogfish are more or less abundant at different seasons ; certainly there seemed to be more gulls and other sea-birds about than is usual on the Riviera coast.

From our base at Portofino we made an uneventful return voyage in two hours to Genoa. It was like going from summer to winter ; so warm and sunny were Portofino, Santa Margherita and Rapallo, so cold and cloudy Genoa. Here sleet fell in the streets, and the outskirts of the surrounding hills were white with snow. But the kindness and hospitality of the Regio Club Italiano more than made up for the inclement climate. We danced and banqueted and enjoyed the most beautiful ballet at the Carlo Felice Theatre that I have ever seen. But the most interesting event of our stay at Genoa was the prizegiving for the regatta in the Palazzo San Giorgio. This was the famous Bank of St. George, the seat of Government of the old Genoese Republic, a similar institution in many ways to our old " John Company." Here the old Genoese navigators were speeded on their travels, here they were welcomed on their return from voyages

which were a source of fresh riches to Genoa and her great bank ; and here the prize-winners of the International Regatta, modern amateur navigators, were rewarded for their prowess afloat, and all were much impressed by the delicate compliment. Certainly no yachtsmen handle their little 18-footers and "sixes" in a more seamanlike and sporting fashion than do the Genoese.

" Fair stood the wind for France
When we our sail advance,
Nor now to prove our chance
Longer will tarry."

Thus we sang after Michael Drayton on the morning following the regatta. Smooth was the sea and the wind offshore. By nine o'clock we had the dinghy lashed on deck and the anchor up and down ; in fact, all ready for sea. Soon the stern fasts were cast off, the engine started up and the mud-hook aboard. Rounding the mole, we cracked on all sail and set a course for Savona. Deep down in my heart I had the ambition of making a passage right through, non-stop, to Menton ; but, knowing the guile and treachery of "the wine dark deep," I determined to keep Savona handy in case of trouble. With the wind off the mountains, although it was not then fresh, I also wished to pass Voltri close inshore, for here it was that we had been constrained to lower all away in a rush on our voyage out, an experience I had no desire to repeat.

The engine was running beautifully, the sails, all drawing, added knots to our speed, and soon



MENTON FROM THE ITALIAN FRONTIER.



SYLVABELLE II AT PORTOFINO.

the Lanterna, the great lighthouse, one of the glories of Genoa, faded away in the haze. We crossed a string of barges built of cement in tow of a motor-tug from Marseilles, and found no wind to hurt us off Voltri; verily, our return voyage opened most auspiciously. After passing Varazze, the home of the Baglietto Bros., from whose yard are launched many famous racing-craft, we sighted a group of trawlers fishing—as usual in pairs. Besides the lateen-rigged craft, some of which, I believe, are fitting power, we saw a couple of steam trawlers fishing farther out to sea. These craft indicated the vicinity of a port, and there, right ashore in the bay, were the tall chimneys of Savona. We were well ahead of my estimated time, and, of course, decided to carry on, for at this rate, if the wind held, we should fetch Menton at 9 p.m. (Italian time).

A spanking breeze now took us down to Cape Noli. Arriving under the shelter of this grand bluff, I enjoyed such a lunch as one can only relish on a passage when all is running according to schedule. On the trip up the weather had been too bad to enable us to enjoy the grandeur of the coast about Cape Noli. It is a very fine headland, although I was sorry to see a wooden landing-stage indicative of stone quarries. All over the world these quarries are sounding the death-knell of coast scenery; in Cornwall they were a curse years ago, and now they are doing their best to ruin the Riviera at such places as Cassis, Cap Ferrat and Beaulieu.

We rounded Cape Noli and a miracle happened. Away went the clouds, out shone the sun and the breeze dropped. By the mere act of sailing round the cape we had changed climates. We had passed from winter to summer. We had left the inclemency of the Gulf of Genoa for the genial warmth of the Riviera of the setting sun. We set a course right across the great blue bay, seaward of Gallinaria Island to Cape Mele. Ashore we could see the lovely wooded hills studded with villas above Alassio, which forms, with Portofino, the most charming winter resort on the Italian Riviera, although it is of little use to the cruising man, as there is no shelter. But it has this advantage over Bordighera—that there is a good little landing-jetty. Alassio would be quite a good spot to spend a few months with a boat fitted with an outboard motor, so that it could be hauled up and down the beach. This beach of firm sand extends right round the bay. Like all Italian seafarers, the fishermen of Alassio know their job, and are ever ready to impart information to the new-comer. The beach boats are of the usual Riviera type, but some of them are quite 30 feet in length. In summer Alassio is crowded with bathers from Turin, Milan, and the other great inland cities of northern Italy.

Shore expenses in Italy are higher than in France, but the kindness and sporting nature of the Italians of all classes, high and low, goes very far to make one's stay a pleasure. We met with no trouble of any kind from the authorities; the only papers we were ever asked for was the

bill of health, which we had to deposit at the *capitaneria*, or Harbour Master's Office, during our sojourn at Genoa.

While I had been contemplating things in general, *Sylvabelle II* had made considerable progress, and we found ourselves off the imposing village of Cervo, in company with a little fleet of Italian coasting-craft beating up for Genoa. Then Oneglia and Porto Maurizio were passed. The wind now fell very light and kept veering about, showing that it would drop entirely with the sun and blow a steady breeze off the land all night, so that we determined to keep inshore when the sun set so as to get the benefit of the offshore breeze and catch every draught down each of the many valleys.

This trip to Italy confirmed my high opinion of the Bermuda rig for cruising. Corentin can handle the mainsail unaided, there is no gaff and only the one halyard. The sail hoists as easily as any stay sail running up and down the railway stay. I do not know how many times he hoisted that mainsail during this hour before sunset, for he was keen to make a good passage for the honour of the ship. When the light air headed us off, down came the sail and we motored on; so soon as the breeze was a bit aft, up it went again, and so on until the sunset and, with it for a few minutes, the wind. This occurred off Cape Verde, near San Remo; and we saw the lighthouse send out its ray of hope. Lights are one of the things they do better in France—this light was not very powerful; nor do I like the

fashion of painting the lighthouses yellow—it makes them difficult to pick out against the cliffs in daytime. Rapidly the night was upon us. On the Riviera the night does not steal softly in from the sea, it comes down from the mountains quite suddenly. With it came the wind off the shore, and we set the sails again. Ashore, the lights of the hotels and villas of San Remo came out one by one, and we could trace the slow progress of a train in and out of the many tunnels, for the line runs along the shore. The sea was bare of shipping, except for a fishing-boat pulled in towards Ospedaletti. Cape Ampeglio and Bordighera brought more lights ashore, and we found that we were holding our own with the train. Clear of the cape, we saw, right ahead, the brilliant red and green lights that mark the entrance to Monaco Harbour, magnificent lights these, that add to the nocturnal colour scheme of the Principality. Inshore of this brilliancy lay our home port. Soon we were off the Rochers Rouges, the famous caves in which were found the remains of a prehistoric man—a veritable giant.

We now edged into Garavan Bay and picked up the brilliant illumination of the Amiraute Restaurant. This place, as its name denotes, overlooks the harbour, and the proprietor flies the signal "Come and Dine" from his flagstaff as an invitation to yachtsmen entering the harbour. The cooking being the best on the coast, most owners are glad to answer the call. Then we sighted the light on the end of the Menton break-

water, and five minutes later Corentin had picked up the mooring buoy as the church clock struck eight. We had made our passage from Genoa in twelve hours ; allowing for the hour's difference in French and Italian time. After a friendly hail from the Customs we went home to dinner. Our cruise to the Gulf of Genoa was at an end.

CHAPTER VIII

A Spring Cruise in Provence

(May, 1924)

MENTON CHURCH had announced noon before we had taken leave of our friends and set out across the bay towards Cap Martin. *Sylvabelle II* was bound for her voyage north to the Atlantic for the summer. Her crew consisted of Corentin, my paid hand, the Viking and the present scribe. In fact, we were the same crew that had brought *Sylvabelle I* down from Brittany in 1922. The day was Sunday, May 4, 1924, the sea smooth, the sun hot and the wind a light air from the east, before which we set sail in an endeavour to get as far west as Cannes for the night. The sea was covered with tiny *velellæ*; a species of Portuguese men-of-war, called by the Mentonese *Barchette di San Jiouan*. Very pretty at sea with their tiny sails set, these siphonophores are a veritable pest when cast up and left to rot in the sun along the foreshore. Off Monaco we obtained a fine view of the snow-clad peaks of Corsica, which I had never seen before from sea-level. Towards Cape Ferrat we sighted a sun-fish (*Orthogoriscus mola*), the Viking making the

usual unsuccessful attempt to harpoon it with the boathook. Then we fell in with a flock of gulls battenning on a shoal of sardines. There was no hope for the sardines for a vast horde of porpoises pursued them ; I have never seen so many porpoises before. The sea was very clear and smooth so that we could plainly see the porpoises playing all round, looking like giant otters ; floating on the surface were numbers of dead sardines vomited up by the surfeited porpoises. When we had opened up Villefranche Bay the breeze freshened and we were soon making good progress across the Bay of Angels, off Nice, looking very white and hot in the fierce sunlight. Approaching Cape Antibes we met *Pays de France*, once the Kaiser's *Meteor III*.

Very beautiful was the Antibes Peninsula, gay with spring flowers, and very green and fascinating were the Lerins Isles. By four we were off Cannes, passing between St. Marguerite Island and the Croisette Point. I decided to forgo the fleshpots of Cannes and carry on before the east wind. As usual, there was quite a fleet of small craft cruising about off Cannes, and down towards the red cliffs of theatrical Trayas we met a couple of *tartanes* beating up for Cannes, with wine from St. Tropez. Off Agay we found quite a swell and took a last glance at the snow-clad Maritime Alps as we crossed Frejus Bay. Slowly sank the sun behind the green hills of the Maures, lighting the waves with a rosy glow. Leaving St. Maxime to port we rounded the breakwater and let go in St. Tropez Harbour as night crept in from the sea.

After dinner, the Viking and I forgathered at a little water-side tavern, the head-quarters of the *tartane* fraternity. Here amongst a surprising collection of tall yarns one may glean an occasional hint of use to the Mediterranean navigator. There is quite a smack of W. W. Jacobs about this gathering of *tartane* skippers. The chief drawbacks from the point of view of the foreign yachtsman are the intricacies of the rich Provençal brogue and the potency of the liquor, a pure white spirit distilled from the lees of the local wine. It was an interesting evening, notwithstanding the rival claims of a ball at another house of refreshment across the harbour. We made the acquaintance of a number of St. Tropez worthies, including a little girl with a performing dog, a villainous dwarf passionately in love with our hostess, the jealous husband of the latter, a variety of skippers, old and young, merry and sad. It had been a bad day for some of them. One vessel had carried away a deal of gear rolling about in the swell and had put back to re-fit. Thirty-five of these *tartanes* sail out of St. Tropez; eight of them have been fitted with motors, mostly old lorry engines bought from the surplus war-stock of various Allied armies at Marseilles. The *tartanes* carry wine grown in the neighbourhood of St. Tropez to Cannes, Nice, Monaco and Menton, where it is retailed to the unsuspecting tourist as "vin du pays." It is a capital drink when untampered with, especially the pink variety. Sand-barging is also carried on by the *tartanes*. Their rig is very unwieldy and they rarely make a serious

attempt to go windward, preferring to wait in harbour for a slant. The long lateen main gaff is rapidly dying out in favour of a loose-footed gaff mainsail, which is brailed up or scandalized more easily than the lateen sail can be reefed. Just before closing time an old friend came in. He had one eye, bare feet, and had overestimated his capacity for storing the local liquor. This old fellow is known as "*Lysistrata*," for he had once sailed in the *Lysistrata* and is mightily proud of the fact. To-night we had met him a bit late and his Provençal was beyond our comprehension. However, he ejected the dwarf and put up the shutters, what time the landlord spun us yarns of the *tartane* races held at Cannes Regatta in pre-war days.

Going aboard, we were lulled to sleep by the strains of the piano-organ at the ball across the harbour and awoke at five to find a still morning but a rather unpleasant sunrise. We had no definite objective but the general idea was to get as far to the westward as circumstances would permit. The lovely gulf of St. Tropez never looked more lovely than that morning in the early sunlight, and I bitterly regretted leaving the Riviera coast. Next year I determined to stay south, cruising to Corsica and Sardinia. I am convinced that a summer could be spent afloat in the western Mediterranean with just as much pleasure and amusement as is to be found in tidal waters.

Heavy clouds hung about the hills, and off Cape Camarat a rain squall came off the land;

ahead, towards Hyères, were flashes of lightning, while the low growl of thunder was heard. This, and a nasty head swell rolling up from the westward off Cape Lardier, half decided me to put into Cavalaire. I edged into the land towards Cavalaire Bay, but the storm passed away, and along the lovely wooded coast I found shelter from the westerly swell which is never so troublesome as that coming from the east, out of the Gulf of Genoa. We met a motor fishing-boat from Lavandou on her way to shoot nets for crawfish off Cape Lardier. These nets are of very large mesh and have scraps of fish lashed in them to tempt the unwary *langouste*. The weather improved but a westerly wind made sailing impossible, so we lowered the sails and proceeded under power along the coast of the Maures Mountains, past pretty Bonporteau Cove, the Dattier with its restaurant and nigger cook to Le Canadel, whence we headed across the sound in smooth water to the Golden Isles of Hyères.

At eleven we felt more than ready for lunch. Entering a landlocked cove at Port Cros Island we picked up a buoy. This is one of the most beautiful spots on the whole Riviera from Marseilles to Leghorn. A kind of southern Lulworth, the bay of emerald and peacock-blue water is set in a semicircle of hills clad in pines, heath and wild flowers, a Corsican *maquis*. On a tiny cape, purple and scarlet with wild flowers, stands an ancient fortress, mellow with age and reeking with romance. Alongshore, near a small landing-stage, is a hamlet of red-roofed cottages, with a

handful of small craft on their moorings. The land is high and thickly wooded from sea-level to summit. A man in a wideawake hat and black beard came out in a little lateen-sailed skiff and had a look at us on his way to a smaller island across a sound. A small motor-boat popped across from the mainland, and I surmised that this was the postman delivering the day's mail among the outer islands. Over sea and islands there lay a grateful feeling of calm and placid repose. Until I visit the Southern Pacific I do not expect to meet with anything more fitting to supply a stage setting of Stevenson than Port Cros. Apart from the sea, the woods and hills, and that smack of romance that is ever associated with an island, the blockhouses and citadel of Port Cros conjure up a score of pages from Marryat, Stevenson, Quiller Couch, Conrad and Barrie. One is almost afraid to land for fear of falling foul of Starkey, Long John Silver or England. No wonder this is a favourite anchorage for summer yachtsmen from Marseilles and the Riviera.

After lunch we managed to tear ourselves away from the mellow stone walls of the old castle, the wild exotic flowers and atmosphere of pirates and buccaneers, and got under way for an unknown destination—not exactly sealed orders, but a desire to rove the Main. We set a course westward ho! along the pretty coast of Porquerolles, the next island, not so high or landlocked as Port Cros, but equally romantic. From here we passed through the Escampobario Passage between the

islands and the Giens Peninsula. Here, again, we went back to the pages of Conrad, for we could see every detail of the coast described in *The Rover* and actually overhauled a *tartane* that might have carried old Peyrol to his seaman's grave (the bronzed old buccaneer in a red shirt at the helm was almost old enough, as was his craft). On every rock and islet grew a gay splash of wild flowers in vivid contrast with the peacock blue of the Mediterranean. And so the afternoon wore on, until Cape Sicié, the most southerly point of France, lay abeam. This magnificent bluff is often mentioned in accounts of the blockade of Toulon. Marryat calls it "Cape See-see" in *Peter Simple*, and this was probably its name in the Navy at that time.

The wind now fell away calm, and rounding the islet of Embiez I stood into the land with the intention of passing the night at Bandol. We fell in with many small motor fishing-boats setting long lines and trammels, and there were evident signs that Bandol looks to the sea for a livelihood. Away in the west the fantastic cliffs of the Eagle's Beak beyond La Ciotat showed in silhouette as a giant bird opening wide its beak against the glow of the setting sun.

We tied up to the quay at Bandol near an old friend, *Bellita*, an 8 metres 50 that had been with us as far afield as Genoa ; we also found an ex-M.L. and a rather curious craft of the American "Sea Bird" type. Bandol wishes to be taken seriously as both a winter and summer resort. Certainly, from the yachting point of view, the little place

has much to recommend it ; this season they held a most sporting International Regatta, which proved a great success in spite of the sneers of older resorts. A great advantage at Bandol is the patent slip, a convenience entirely lacking even at Nice or Monaco. The harbour provides good shelter, plenty of room, and no smells. Shady palms and cafés line the quay. It was a very warm night and we felt quite tropical, sitting on deck watching the joyous throng of men and maidens.

On Tuesday, May 6, we motored out of Bandol at 7 a.m., bound for Marseilles. The morning showed us Bandol in an equally favourable light and we could not but admire the olive groves and pretty wooded villas ashore, though a mist soon came down and shut out the sun. The wind was west, though the swell came rolling along astern of us from the east, and later in the day I heard that they had a stiff easterly blow at Toulon, though we carried this dead muzzler of a west wind as far as Marseilles. In spite of the fog it was a very pleasant run along the red cliffs studded with green pines past La Ciotat, the repair depot of the Messageries Maritimes. We passed the little green island under the Eagle's Beak, Cape Canaille and the entrance to Cassis, most fascinating of Provençal havens. Our good Bettus-Loire engine, as usual, behaved in exemplary fashion. Now we had the famous *calanques*, the fiords of Provence, abeam, and soon we picked up the arid islands of Riou, Jarres and Maire, where we found quite a fleet of little motor fishing-boats hauling

pots for murries, which are used in the concoction of that well-known Marseilles fish-broth, the *bouillabaisse*. This coast is always very stern and barren. In summer one is scorched by the sun beating down on the bare rocks, and in winter the icy blasts of the mistral, rebounding off the same rocks, freeze one to the very marrow. Round in the Bay of Marseilles the fog lifted a bit and a ray of sunshine lit up the golden dome of Nôtre Dame de la Garde. Between the Island of Pomergue and the Château d'If a flotilla of small motor-craft were trawling under power ox-fashion, that is to say, with a trawl towed between two boats. Those accustomed to trawling in the Channel and Atlantic are apt to ridicule this style of fishing, but I believe the bottom of the Mediterranean is so rugged that a single boat is bound to capsize or foul the net.

I never enter Marseilles without a thrill of romance. This morning the accustomed thrill was enhanced by the presence of a couple of Italian brigs and a schooner. The latter was just moving through the water, but so light was the weather that the brigs had boats out towing ahead, as in the good old days of the wooden walls, the stick-and-string days of Captain Marryat. The Château d'If recalled the Count of Monte Cristo. We pass the forts of St. Nicholas and St. John after skirting the creek of the Catalans, passing under the transporter bridge, and, dodging the ferry, we find ourselves in the Vieux Port, in the very heart of Marseilles. Though founded by the

Phœnicians, Marseilles generally dates her birth from the landing of Phocis, a Greek chieftain, who fled from Persian rule at Phœcea, in Asia Minor. Whenever possible, the people of Marseilles drag in something about Phocis; the French word for seal, *phoque*, is derived from Phocian, because the old-time mariners of Marseilles were supposed to be intrepid seamen, and, like the seals, always at sea. Sooner or later at Marseilles, you will have to listen to the old tale about the love of the Marseilles people for exaggerating the charm of their native city. One man boasted that the fish caught at Marseilles were so big that the entrance to the port was once entirely blocked for several days by one sardine. This tall story was founded on fact, for the entrance to Marseilles harbour was once blocked by a sardine; this, however, was not a fish, but a vessel called *The Sardine*, which sank in the fairway. I know of no harbour quite like the Vieux Port at Marseilles: it contains a most catholic collection of craft, both in and out of commission, the quays are thronged with the most extraordinary crowd of nondescript folk imaginable, from every country bordering on the Mediterranean, and sooner or later they will come and stare at your vessel as though they had never seen a yacht before. An amusing feature of Marseilles are the shell-fish stalls, where the natives consume oysters and mussels all the year round. At the foot of the Cannebière, the chief thoroughfare of the city, are moored the floating quarters of the Société Nautique de Marseilles, a most hospitable and

sporting club, founded as long ago as 1887. We took up a nice berth close to Madame Heriot's fine schooner *Ailée*, ex *Meteor IV*, and alongside of the British motor-yacht *Hermione*. We intended to get under way at daylight, but dawn brought a violent thunderstorm.

By ten o'clock this had cleared away and the sun was shining. After a tussle with a foul anchor we motored out to sea westward, bound for Port de Bouc. A light westerly wind just allowed us to carry canvas alongshore to Cape Couronne. This is a most inhospitable spot, covered with wrecks; there is now a light buoy off the spit, though it is an unhealthy place, with a cross current out of the Gulf of Fos, which seemed to set us onshore; however, our engine enabled us to weather the buoy, and then we made a fair wind of it up to the entrance to Port de Bouc. A narrow slit in a flat, featureless coastline, Port de Bouc would be a difficult place to find in thick weather. The entrance lies between an old fort to starboard and a breakwater to port; there is a lighthouse on a tower on the fort, and another on the end of the breakwater. The fort is a quaint building, erected by Vauban, though the tower dates back to the twelfth century. We crossed a considerable expanse of shallow water, entered the mouth of a small canal leading up to Arles, and tied up to a derelict barge on the side opposed to the village with its horde of small boys. Here we lunched and planned an expedition up to Martigues. Port de Bouc proved to be rather a disappointing place, one of these new ports that

are generally described as "of considerable commercial interest with a great future," a place of fussy tugs, wharves, cranes, factory hooters, dust and dirty children, such as Avonmouth and La Pallice. We cast off from the barge, and under the direction of a *douanier*, made for the open lagoon and the entrance of the Canal de Caronte, which leads up to Martigues. The channel here lies on the port hand, and but for the kindly warning toot of a passing tug we should have gone aground. This canal is being deepened and widened, and wharves are being built all the way up, part of a vast scheme to turn the whole lagoon, with that of Berre, into a suburb of Marseilles. For Marseilles, now the largest city of France after Paris, has got too big for its boots and wants room to expand. A canal is being dug from Martigues to Marseilles, which will place the latter in direct inland waterway communication with Holland and the North Sea by the Rhone-Rhine Canal.

At Martigues we found a harbour-master who took his duties very seriously; he was one of those vociferous animated Southerners described by Daudet in the pages of *Tartarin de Tarascon*. I am afraid his dignity was rather ruffled, as we did not realize he was the harbour-master; one does not expect to meet such a nautical dignitary so far inland. We played a game of hide-and-seek with this good harbour-master: we berthed up on one side of the canal what time he gesticulated on the other. Then the Viking spotted him for the first time, and we shifted our berth

to the other side of the canal, but, unfortunately, the harbour-master had shifted his berth, and was now raving and foaming on the spot which we had just left. At length all was explained to the satisfaction of all. Like many a stage farce, this little farce in real life had a happy though surprising ending, for on joining us at the local wine-shop, our new friend ordered a cup of coffee. Of all the picturesque spots on the Mediterranean coast of France, Martigues is the first. Its silver canals and quaint craft, its ramshackle dwellings, ancient quays and shady nooks are without rival.

Martigues is one of the leading fishing centres on the French Mediterranean coast. One may roughly divide this fishery into two parts, or "arts," as they are called locally.

"Le grand art," or deep-sea fishing, out in the Mediterranean, and the "petit art," or inshore fishing in the Etang de Berre. The grand art is carried on in lateen-rigged craft and steam trawlers, of which there are four. The trawling is done ox-fashion: that is to say, the trawl is towed between two boats in the manner general all over the Mediterranean. Attempts have been made to fish from a single craft by Breton trawlers, but they always lose their nets. The sea bottom in the Mediterranean is so rough and irregular in depth that two boats are required to tow the net. In addition to trawling, mackerel-whiffing is carried on out in the Gulf of Fos and the Gulf of Lyons by sailing craft. These boats are lateen-rigged, and bobbing poles are fitted to enable a

number of lines to be fished in the manner practised in Devon and Cornwall. All the fish caught by the Martigues boats is railed away mostly to Marseilles and Riviera towns. On the occasion of my visit, trawl fish averaged seven francs per pound. In spite of this prohibitive price, a super-excellent fish-soup topped the bill at dinner at the Hôtel du Cours, a dish far superior to a *bouillabaisse* at one of the famous restaurants of Marseilles.

The "petit art" is practised on the Etang de Berre in small black-hulled craft with white lateen sails; they are almost flat-bottomed, and very sharp-ended, after the style of a cod dory. On a fine sunny day, with a fresh breeze blowing off the hills, these mosquito craft resemble white water-butterflies skimming to and fro over the blue waters of the lagoon. Small fish for the *bouillabaisse* soup, caught in nets, and eels form the majority of the catch.

Martigues has little history, leading a calm existence down the ages. She is proud of one of her sons, Tenque, founder of the great Order of St. John of Jerusalem, although her chief glory is in her adopted son Ziem, who discovered the artistic possibilities of the Provençal Venice. The effects of the light reflected by the great natural mirror of the Etang de Berre are very beautiful. The light at Martigues is less fierce and crude than is usually the case on the sun-soaked shores of the Mediterranean; it seems to be toned down by the presence of the great lagoon. It is this light, coupled with the picturesque nature of the lake-

side town and her quaint fisher-folk, that attract artists from all over the world.

Strolling about the town and quays, we discover many pictures in real life. An old fellow tying up his green-hulled boat after a day on the lagoon might be Said the Fisherman. Other veterans equally Oriental in character are pulling home in the evening light, or hoisting their nets to dry. An ancient crone, a wrinkled old witch, is mending a wicker eel-trap. A bare-legged shepherdess comes over the bridge with a tiny flock of goats. In shady little squares men and women are gossiping in their doorways after the heat and burden of the day. In one of these squares we come upon a group of Grecian maidens mending a net in the dusk of a stable—a stable with a kitten and a donkey, after the heart of George Morland.

One is struck by the Greek type of the natives of Martigues; this is especially noticeable in the features of the girls who parade up and down in bright red, green, or orange shawls, after the manner of Spain. Marseilles cuts the Mediterranean seaboard of France in two: east of Marseilles the people have Italian characteristics, their Provençal speech is peppered with Italian words, and their physique is Italian; west of Marseilles the Provençal is rich in Spanish and Catalan words and the people dress and look like Spaniards, even going the length of favouring bull-fighting. It is useless to follow this up as regards the design of the boats, as these follow the nature of the seaboard, being a survival of the fittest down the ages. Fishing and working boats in all countries

will be found to be of a type most suitable for the nature of the coastline they navigate, for the seas they sail. A Falmouth quay punt would be as ludicrous at Scarborough as a bawley on the Upper Thames.

As is the case all over Provence, a game of bowls is in progress on the quay near the trawlers. From a water-side wine-shop comes the sound of Provençal oaths and loud vociferation, and I remember that a general election draws nigh. Returning aboard after dinner, we sit smoking on deck, enjoying the calm of the southern night. Across the silent canal comes the lilt of a mandoline to remind us of Keats—"Dance, and Provençal song and sunburnt mirth."

A bitter mistral was blowing when we turned out at daylight on the morning of Thursday, May 8. After a cup of coffee we cast off as the sun rose over the Etang de Berre and set off down the canal to Port de Bouc in company with a little fleet of fishing craft. These flat-bottomed punts soon set their triangular sails to the mistral and added greatly to the picture that was spread out for our delectation in the clear morning light. At Port de Bouc we picked up some rather larger craft, though of the same design, and passed out with them between the pier and the Vauban fort on to the broad bosom of the Gulf of Fos. A cluster of small craft were whiffing for mackerel under the shelter of the land. Though of the same lateen-rigged, punt-like type, these boats had something of home about them which I could not at first diagnose, and then I saw that it was

the bobbing poles, for they were being sailed and fished by one man after the West Country fashion. In the offing the ex-trawlers were rapidly reducing their canvas, and it did not need much imagination to paint a mind-picture of the weather outside in the Gulf of Lyons. I had heard the Lions roar once before in a mistral off the Rhone Delta and decided not to undertake the long shelterless passage to Cette with only Grau du Roi, a port I had never entered, to pop into in case of necessity. Right ahead across the turgid waters of the Gulf of Fos rose the grain hoists and warehouses of Saint Louis du Rhône, towering above the flat saltings. This settled the question. I would proceed to Cette by the island route up the Rhone to Beaucaire and across the Camargue by canal past Aigues Mortes. Last year when obtaining my canal permit I had taken the precaution to include this route in case of encountering bad weather in the Gulf of Lyons, and now it was to stand me in good stead. I made known my decision to the ship's company who were delighted at the prospect of navigating waters new. Passing a sailing-ship bound for Saint Louis, we steered for the end of a long breakwater running out a couple of kilometres from the land. Owing to the deposit brought down by the Rhone the land is rapidly gaining over the sea, and in some places the banks are reported to be running seawards at the rate of a quarter of a mile per annum, so that the shore should be approached with caution. In hazy weather no land is visible in the Gulf of Fos until one is practically ashore. The whole Rhone Delta

is an inhospitable, uncanny spot, and one can imagine the dismay of the yacht-owner, who has come down from England by canal, at making his first acquaintance with the "Latin Lake" at Saint Louis du Rhône.

Through dreary flats, past dull prosaic factories and warehouses, we run up a short canal to Saint Louis. Like Port de Bouc, only more so, Saint Louis du Rhône is entirely given over to wharves, tugs, barges, grain hoists, petrol dumps and other unpleasant features of the world's commerce. Under the direction of a complaisant tug skipper we tied up at the entrance to a lock. To our delight the lock-keeper announced his intention of opening the gate in an hour's time. In a few terse phrases he told us hair-raising tales of the rapidly increasing current in the Rhone and of the utter lack of anything in the shape of a system of buoyage. He went on to describe the fate of several little yachts that had gone aground in midstream, and wound up by imploring us not to risk our craft and lives in a perilous undertaking when the honest man by his side was a river pilot at our entire disposal. I at once refused and went aboard somewhat disgruntled. Apart from their expense I dislike both tugs and pilots on principle. There is something undignified in being dragged along astern of a penny steam-boat like a tin can tied to a dog's tail, and as for a pilot—well, to sit and watch another man steer your little hooker always seems to me what the Australians call a rather "sissy" pastime. Then I went and took a look at the Rhone; it was a very

inhospitable, swiftly moving volume of water, nor was there a vestige of anything to indicate a channel. I began to think that here was a case when the really strong-minded man would jettison his principles. I compromised by consulting the ship's company. The Viking laughed at the idea of a pilot—had we not safely navigated the Garonne and the Loire? Corentin pointed out that both the Loire and Garonne were tidal, and that had we got aground it was only a case of waiting for the tide. In the Rhone, however, there was no tide. Finally, after a deal of cogitating and "chewing the rag," the pilot was engaged and went home to breakfast, what time we set about getting the sticks out. The sails were unbent, and by means of a tackle specially designed for the purpose, the 30-foot mainmast was lowered in its tabernacle, one end of the tackle being anchored to the top of the lock gate and operated from there. *Sylvabelle II* being designed for inland cruising as well as seafaring, her mainmast is no longer than her overall length, so that there is no overhang to worry about in locks, but the mainmast has to be unshipped from its tabernacles and the butt moved forward. In an hour's time everything was ready for the inland cruise; all hands had worked hard and in a manner that so astonished the natives that they forgot to spit. Then the Customs came aboard to overhaul our papers and ascertain whether we had paid our engine tax. As far as it is humanly possible, I take care to have the ship's papers in apple-pie order; it saves time and trouble in the long run,

but the ordinary mortal cannot cope with the working of the official mind. It was, therefore, with joy in my heart that I recognized this *douanier* for an old friend whom I had known at Cavalaire on the Maures coast. While we were waiting for the pilot to come aboard and the lock to be opened, we were much amused by the success of a tug stoker who was fishing from his craft with a cast net. At almost each throw he brought up a flounder from the current swirling out of the Rhone through a sluice. Then the great moment arrived, the pilot jumped aboard and the keepers threw open the lock gates. The pilot took the helm and steered out on to the turbid waters of the Rhone. From the base of a tower on the east bank his child waved us good-bye. This tower was built in 1737 by the merchants of Marseilles to act as a signal tower for vessels entering the Rhone; when built it stood on the sea-shore. The sea is now over six miles distant, a striking example of the manner in which the delta is spreading seaward. It is calculated that twenty million cubic metres of deposit are brought down the Rhone each year.

This was the first time I have ever employed a pilot. I got out our only deck-chair and lounged in it in a sunny corner of the cockpit, where I could watch the pilot earn his money. He earned me money, too, for by dodging the current he saved time and fuel. The Rhone ran rapidly between the green banks, with trees rising from the turgid flood, and gave no hint of the deserts that spread on either bank. To starboard on the

east bank lay that wilderness of stones, the Crau, over a hundred square miles of stones (crau is derived from crag), once the bed of the Rhone, or some say, wrongly, the Durance, unless you prefer the more poetical explanation that Jupiter, to aid Hercules in a fight against two giants, caused a hail of stones to rain down from the sky. After Brittany, Provence has more legends than any other French province, and I was not surprised to hear that our pilot knew all about this "battle of giants." On the port hand was the great plain of the Camargue, of whose 200,000 acres quite half are given up to pasture land of marsh and fen roamed by herds of semi-wild cattle in charge of cowboys. The horses are directly descended from Arab steeds left behind by the Saracen invaders, their riders are of still older stock, being of Greek ancestry. A mild form of bull-fighting, or rather bull-baiting, is carried on in the Camargue. The bulls are not killed, the fight consisting in an attempt by a man on foot to remove a cockade placed between the bull's horns, no mean feat. In some respects the Rhone Delta is not unlike that of the Guadalquivir, though the latter is more navigable than the Rhone. A common feature to both are the wild fowl and cowboys in charge of bulls, some of the best fighting bulls of Spain being bred on the banks of the Guadalquivir. Both deltas are the haunt of flamingos and other exotic wild fowl, and in both one finds relief from super-civilization.

By lunch-time our progress was considerably hampered by the current, which the pilot estimated

to run at five knots. We were further impeded by the mistral which blew icy cold in our teeth. Our pilot was engaged to take us as far as Arles, where I proposed to tie up for the night, shipping another pilot as far as Beaucaire, where we were to leave the Rhone for the canal. He was well informed and honest, refusing to go above Arles, as he had not been up for some months. Now and again we passed barges in tow of tugs, some steam and some motor. From time to time along the bank we sighted houseboats with fish traps. These contraptions are like paddle-wheels of net; they scoop up the fish and shoot them into a well at the bottom of the boat, requiring no attention on the part of the fishermen. About three o'clock Arles hove in sight and the pilot picked us a berth just down stream of the Trinquetaille bridge, and went ashore in search of a pilot to take us to Beaucaire on the morrow. He soon returned with the mate of a big tug made in Germany before the war, who volunteered for the job. I now held a pow-wow with the two pilots, for I began to have misgivings about reaching Beaucaire under our own power. *Sylvabelle II* is supposed to achieve seven knots under power, and the pilot announced a 7-knot current in certain places. I decided to get our big dinghy on deck, and hoped that by turning on to petrol, which is supposed to give us an extra knot for a quarter of an hour (when the petrol gets too warm and only gives the same result as paraffin), to stem the 7-knot current which the pilot assured me only ran in patches. The next job was to recruit labour, for my dinghy is

a clench-built boat of 13 feet, and no light weight. The new pilot fetched a young stoker off his tug, and we proceeded to haul the boat up a flight of steps out of the river on to the quay. From the quay-side, with a good deal of Provençal "cussing," we capsized the stubborn craft on to the deck of the parent ship, where it remained until the Garonne was reached. And now came the shock of the trip: the stoker refused a drink!

The most impressive sight in Arles is the Roman theatre; here one seems to get away from the museum atmosphere and can conjure up visions of the past. The aged stones here are more human far than the Aliscamps and its ghoulish sarcophagi. The owner of small craft will find perhaps his chief interest in Arles in the fact that in Roman times the city was surrounded by water and supported a large maritime population. Trinquetailles, now a forlorn suburb across the Rhone, was once a flourishing "sailor town." The mariners of old Arles were divided into three distinct categories, each having its own guild. The *navicularii marini* were the limejuicers of the time, who sailed out on the blue Mediterranean beyond Marseilles. The *nautæ* were the bargees who worked up and down the Rhone and its branches and ramifications. Leading a more humdrum existence in flat-bottomed punts and canoes among the fever-ridden marshes and broads, the *utricularii* complete the list. They were probably the most numerous, though often their craft were mere rafts supported by floats made of inflated bladders and skins. In ancient days the Atlantic coast of

Brittany was linked to the Mediterranean by the inland waterways of the Rhone and Loire, with a portage at Lyons. Here was the great mart of exchange which still survives in the commercial Fair of Lyons.

When we awoke at dawn on the morning of May 9 we found that the Rhone had risen in the night and that the current had gained in strength ; bearing out what I had written overnight. The pilot was sanguine enough, and six o'clock saw us under way. All went well and we made good progress until the Little Rhone was reached. This is a shallow branch running down to Les Saintes Maries de la Mer. This Petit Rhone seems to have no navigable access to the sea ; it fades away in a series of dunes, islets and lagoons, a waste of marsh, fen and flamingos. It would well repay exploration by the owner of a shallow craft immune from mosquitoes and fever.

We passed several fishing-boats with eel-traps, a motor-barge calmly ashore on a sand-bank loading gravel, here and there a heron or kingfisher showed that bird life was not yet extinct in spite of Tartarin de Tarascon. At 8 a.m. the mistral began to pipe up, just as the current began to increase in force, and we had a job to stem the stream. By dint of the pilot's local knowledge, and by running for short spurts on petrol, we managed to gasp upstream, though once or twice I thought we should have to drop down to Arles and solicit a tow. The mistral increased in force and blew off the ice, so that we were much relieved to sight the Castle of Beaucaire and the bridge

that links it with Tarascon. We had taken just three and a half hours to do fifteen kilometres, for it was 9.30 when we entered Beaucaire lock ! Here the pilot left us to rush off to catch a train back to Arles.

Our cruise up the Rhone had been a somewhat arduous undertaking, and it was with a sigh of relief that I stepped ashore at Beaucaire to tie up *Sylvabelle II* in the stagnant waters of the lock cutting.

CHAPTER IX

A Spring Cruise in Provence (*continued*)

BEAUCAIRE, where one leaves the rapid Rhone, is a charming old place with a picturesque castle guarding the river. Here is laid the scene of the love-tale of Aucassin and Nicolette, sung by the old *jongleurs* of Provence, and here Simon de Montfort suffered defeat at the hands of Raymond of Toulouse. The latter brought his archers and men-at-arms up the Rhone in boats, the current in those days being much less rapid than it is now. Across the Rhone lies Tarascon, so called from the Tarasque, or Dragon, slain by St. Martha, the Syrian prophetess. In latter days this has become famous from Alphonse Daudet's novel *Tartarin de Tarascon*, a caricature of the alleged tendency to boast and exaggerate on the part of the Provençal sportsmen.

One morning, early in May, I cast off from Beaucaire quay and set out along the canal in *Sylvabelle II*, bound for Cette and the Canal du Midi. Running through very flat country, the advantage of this canal is freedom from locks, the chief drawback to inland cruising. The day was sunny and it was very hot on the canal, although a bitter mistral was screaming over our

heads, warded off by a screen of cypresses, a kind thought of that admirable body Les Ponts et Chaussées. Here and there a kingfisher flitted to and fro, his gaudy coat making a splash of blue against the poppies on the bank ; a motor-barge or two passed us and seven short kilometres brought us to the only lock of the day. Here my companion, the Viking, confessed that he had forgotten the butter in his emotion at taking farewell of Beaucaire. The lady of the lock shook her head at butter—she found olive oil good enough for her cooking—and offered us eggs.

Beyond the lock we ran on through flat country, hastening towards the Camargue, the Pampas of Provence. This Camargue is a huge plain, traversed by the Rhone and Little Rhone. It is a country of fen and marsh, a vast lagoon with flamingos, cranes and other exotic wild fowl being one of its chief characteristics. Herds of cattle, in charge of cowboys with lances, could be seen in the distance across the plain ; overhead flocks of wild fowl, with long trailing legs, I took to be cranes. Although little used, the canal is very well kept, and twice we had to slow down to pass a dredger in operation. From time to time we sighted little white flags, marking the position of stake nets. We made a short halt at Saint Gilles, a very ancient place with a beautiful abbey, where St. Louis stayed for two months while his fleet was fitting out for the Second Crusade down at Aigues Mortes. The bones of St. Gilles have been transported from the abbey to Saint Sernin, at Toulouse (on the Canal du Midi). It is said



Photo, G. K. Ballance, F.R.P.S.

THE ROMAN THEATRE AT ARLES.

that St. Louis could not sleep at Aigues Mortes on account of the fever-bearing mosquitoes. Running on across the flat, lockless plain we reached the walled city of Aigues Mortes about 4 p.m.

Many people wonder why St. Louis pitched on such an unpromising spot as Aigues Mortes for his base for the Crusades. The chief reason was that Aigues Mortes was the only port on the Mediterranean situated in his territory, for he was only suzerain and not sovereign of Provence, an independent province which did not come under the French crown until three centuries later. Although Aigues Mortes was never on the seashore (as some historians would have us believe), it is certain that a greater depth of water was available than is now the case, for it must be remembered that the Rhone has since changed its bed, the Little Rhone flowing at one time close to the city. The little fishing port of Grau du Roi, down on the Gulf of Lyons, is now three miles from Aigues Mortes, and it is connected by canal. It harbours a number of trawlers, which fish in pairs, ox-fashion; four of them have been fitted with Baudouin motors. Rising from the silent waters of the lagoons and salt marshes the mellow walls of Aigues Mortes are wreathed in melancholy. Aigues Mortes signifies dead waters, and dead, indeed, are the waters, and dead the town. The chief feature is the great Tower of Constance, built by St. Louis to serve as a lighthouse and watch-tower for his fleet. Philip the Bold built the walls and fifteen towers, which completely surrounded the

town. He took his plan from the town of Dami-etta. In spite of the dirt, mistral, and dreary acres of lagoon and marsh, there is a considerable amount of atmosphere about Aigues Mortes—it has enough of the grand manner to be more than the poor relation of Carcassonne. If you have read Maurice Barrés you will meet in the dusty, wind-swept streets more than one little maid of the South that might well be a daughter of Berenice.

Even Aigues Mortes has a railway. This modern contraption crosses the canal on a low swing-bridge, in charge of a man from Brittany. When waited upon by Corentin he was found in the very Breton occupation of mending a fishing-net. Addressed in the tongue of his native province, he told us that the station-master kept the key of the bridge and that he would not be able to let us through until after the down train had come in. We returned to the town and took seats at a café, from which we were recalled from a concentrated contemplation of a statue of St. Louis by the arrival of Corentin with the announcement that his fellow-countryman was in the act of opening the swing-bridge. We took a last rather regretful look at the drowsy little place. Dirty and windswept, there is something about Aigues Mortes that cannot fail to appeal to those who have a fondness for the past. The silent streets, the still more silent lagoons, and the great marshes of the Little Rhone, the old walls, gates and towers, still standing in this desert of silence, provide a haven of peace and quiet not often found in these turbulent times.

A considerable charm of Aigues Mortes lies in the utter absence of pose. There is none of the museum atmosphere that one finds at Arles and less of that self-conscious show-place spirit that tends to detract from the charm of Carcassonne.

Sylvabelle II now took us on for the remainder of the daylight across a vast expanse of marsh and lagoon. Along the bank of the canal we passed a number of fishermen working nets stretching across from one bank to the other. Their faces were burnt as dark as Arabs; they seemed pleasant enough fellows, dwelling in reed huts, with a flat-bottomed punt and a dog. Fish seemed quite plentiful, bass and grey mullet leaping above the silver surface. Ahead loomed the Montagnes Noires, foot-hills of the Cevennes, towering above the desolate marshes. Two rivers bisect the canal on their way from these hills to the sea: these are the Vidourle and Lunel.

When in flood the water of these streams crosses the canal, at right angles, with considerable force. To enable the barges to continue without being swept down the river, a traveller, on an overhead wire, is provided on the upstream bank of the canal. Fishermen ran out of their little semi-African huts as we passed, and one of them threw us a couple of fish for dinner. Fresh drinking-water seemed a problem, for we saw a couple of girls towing a little punt with demijohns, which, they told us, they were going to fill with water. The evening light fell soft and mellow on the dunes and marshes as we drew near to the coast. To port, through gaps in the dunes, we could see

the blue waters of the Mediterranean whipped by the scourge of the mistral.

To starboard, across acres of evil-smelling lagoon, we could glimpse the distant foot-hills of the Cevennes. Several houseboats were passed. These were all fitted with wire mosquito blinds and were inhabited by the crews of the dredgers and their families. A tiny flotilla of punts, manned by washerwomen sitting on their tubs of linen and towed by laughing, bare-footed girls, was overhauled. By half-past seven Palavas steeple was in sight. This is a seaside resort in high favour with the inhabitants of Montpellier, near by. Seen from the sea, it presents a most imposing appearance ; its back view displayed a single row of villas, a skeleton town. On either hand were lagoons, draining through sluices into the canal. The setting sun, having transformed the lagoons into a cloth of gold, plunged behind the spurs of the Cevennes in a ball of fire. If I insist on the foot-hills of the Cevennes it is because they were the only feature of the landscape that was not marsh or lagoon. Night overtook us at Crois  e du Luz, where the canal crosses the River Lez on its course to the sea through the Palavas Lagoon. We decided to stop here for the night, and ran ashore, but got off with the help of some fishermen, who assisted us with poles and boat-hooks. The cheery, unspoilt character of the marshmen is one of my most pleasant memories of the trip along this canal. We tied up to a dredger, what time the Viking fried our present of fish, a kind of perch, very bony, but quite

good eating. The mistral dropped with the sun, giving way to a plague of mosquitoes, causing us to beat a precipitate retreat below. It had been a grand day, full of interest and free from trouble, our good Bettus engine running like clockwork.

Five-thirty saw us under way, cold, but bright, and soon very sunny. Until the wind sprang up the surface of the canal was like a mirror. Lagoons, marsh and Mediterranean formed the view.

Near here are the remains of the once-flourishing Greek city of Maguelone, destroyed by Charles Martel in 737 in order to drive out the Saracens. Rebuilt under Papal supervision, the town became the port of Montpellier, until it once more relapsed into its present state of a dead city. Passing a good many marshmen and fishermen, our first halt was at Frontignan, famed for its wine, a kind of sickly port, used, I believe, to give body to thinner wines.

From Frontignan, a long cutting took us out of the canal on to the broad bosom of the Thau Lagoon. We picked up the main channel and carried on until the entrance to Cette opened out to port. This is rather difficult to find unless one knows that it is tucked away over on the opposite shore. Running through a little fleet of flat-bottomed punts dredging for mussels, we passed under the railway bridge and tied up to the quay in Cette. It had been an interesting run, and proved that one can enter the Canal du Midi from the Rhone without risking the ship

on the proverbially stormy waters of the Gulf of Lyons, a fact of interest to the small motor-cruiser who wishes to cross from the Riviera to the Atlantic.

Of all the harbours on the French Mediterranean seaboard Cette is the nearest approach to a northern fishing-port. Here is a constant coming and going of craft under power or canvas, much ado of men and women about nets, gear, and fish-trunks, white sails, brown nets and blue jerseys against a background of sapphire sea and sky. With the exception of Port Vendres, Cette is the only harbour of any consequence between Barcelona and Marseilles. It is placed at the junction of the Midi and Paris-Lyon Méditerranée railways with main line connection with Spain, Bordeaux, Paris, Marseilles, Lyons, Italy, Switzerland ; in fact it is within easy hail of all Western Europe. In addition to its favourable railway situation Cette is at the head of the canal to the Rhone via Aigues Mortes and Beaucaire and the famous Canal du Midi to Bordeaux and the Atlantic. Cette is essentially a wine port, receiving wine from Spain and Algeria to fortify the local vintage, for although capable of an enormous output, the celebrated vineyards of Cette and Béziers are unable to meet the great demand for light table wine. Sheep and cattle are also imported from Algeria through Cette.

Much of the wine is carried by canal between Cette and Béziers on motor-barges. Heavy oil-engines are fitted, and I have not yet seen a single barge in trouble, either on the canals or on the

open waters of the Thau Lagoon. Inspired by the good work of these barges many of the fishermen are now fitting motors. There are three types of fishing-boat in service at Cette: the lateen-rigged trawlers, the smaller tunny-boats, and small punts of the same type as those in use at Martigues. The latter are employed for mussel fishing, whiffing, and netting on the Thau Lagoon. The tunny-boats are open craft about 20 feet long with a lateen sail set on a stump of a mast raking forward. They go out at night, and shoot large meshed drift nets for tunny, returning to port in the morning. These Mediterranean tunny run bigger than their brethren of the Atlantic; their flesh is red, like that of a salmon, and instead of being caught a hundred miles out at sea on a whiffing line, like mackerel, they are taken quite close inshore in drift nets. Formerly these tunny were caught in stake nets called *madragues*, but they seem to have fallen into disuse, although I have seen small ones in operation at La Ciotat and in the Gulf of Genoa.

The lateen-rigged trawlers fish in daylight, leaving at dawn and returning about six. They fish "ox-fashion," that is to say, one trawl is towed between two boats. I have seen them land red mullet, soles, sharks, squid, whiting and a variety of local fish to which I should be hard put to give a name. A pair of these craft have fitted motors, while down the coast at Grau du Roi four boats of a similar type have installed Baudouin engines. No modification is made to the lateen rig, the engines being used solely for

use in getting to and from the fishing grounds in calm weather. The lateen rig is the oldest in the world, and the marine motor the most modern, so that at Cette we find an interesting combination of ancient and modern. On entering harbour under canvas the ship's boy is sent aloft and out on to the yard-arm to furl the sail. In local parlance the yard of the lateen rig is called *antenne*, after the antennæ of the *cigale* (a kind of grasshopper), the national emblem of Provence.

Evening is the time to visit the harbour, when the ox-trawlers are winging their way home after the day's fish and the tunny-smacks are putting to sea for the night. The great blue Mediterranean gradually changes to red in the glow of the setting sun, the outer harbour is full of small craft in movement, and on the quays gaily-clad girls and women are busy selling and buying baskets of multi-coloured fishes. The morning, too, has its charm; gone are the trawlers, but the tunny-boats are all moored. Up on the breakwater blue-clad men are laying out nets to dry and exchanging chaff with groups of girls mending nets in the southern sunshine. Down on the quay men are busy about nets and gear, and here and there one hears the note of an engine being tuned up (the Mediterranean fisherman takes good care of his engine, much more so than his Breton confrère).

Unlike most Mediterranean ports Cette is comparatively modern, the foundation-stone of the harbour having been laid in the year of the Great Fire of London. Prior to this date all the marine

activity of the place was confined to the Thau Lagoon. From its first conception till the present day the authorities have been confronted with a serious silting up of Cette Harbour, and various schemes and breakwaters have been devised from time to time. In the Mediterranean there is no tide to carry off the deposit brought down the rivers, and deltas result. Though there is no estuary at Cette, the outlet of the Thau Lagoon serves the same purpose and a considerable volume of water flows through the short canal from the lagoon to the outer harbour. Cette is a port of bridges, but luckily for the cruising yachtsmen, these are all of the swing variety and readily opened, except the railway bridge, which has considerable headroom.

Here at Cette let us take leave of *Sylvabelle II*, for she is about to enter the Canal du Midi once more for the return voyage across France to her summer quarters on the south coast of Brittany.

CHAPTER X

A Summer Cruise on the Breton Coast

AT the end of May 1924 *Sylvabelle II* arrived at Le Pouliguen, a little tidal port on the north shore of the Loire estuary. In view of the increasing interest taken in cruising through France, it may be stated that the maximum draught on the Bordeaux to Cette route is 5 feet 6 inches. *Sylvabelle* left Cette on May 10 at noon, and arrived at Le Pouliguen at 8 p.m. on May 27; she was held up for five days at Castelnau-dary awaiting repairs to a lock gate. One day was spent in setting up the masts and rigging at Bordeaux, whilst she lay stormbound for a day at La Pallice and another at Les Sables d'Olonne. Thus, eight out of seventeen days were spent at anchor.

Le Pouliguen is a favourite spot with Nantes yachtsmen, on account of its excellent road and rail communications, beautiful sands, innumerable villas and the Casino of La Baule. The approaches to the harbour dry out for nearly a mile. Yachts moor in tiers along the shore, with anchors out bow and stern, and warps ashore. I spent June cruising and fishing in the broad estuary of the Loire, making a short trip across to Pornic and

the Island of Noirmoutier ; these were old haunts, and it was pleasant to find oneself back in familiar waters. Pornic, though it dries out at every tide, makes a delightful cruising centre. It is a quaint little town, full of interest to the lover of small craft, and enjoys the best summer climate on the coast. My fishing diary for the summer of 1924 shows not only the worst weather but the poorest sport since the Great War. The fish were scarce, smaller than usual, and fewer species were taken. Hard winds, mostly west and north-west, with practically the weight of winter, an almost constant swell and abnormally cold water were unpleasant features of the summer of 1924 on the west coast of France.

Of bass, those salmon of the sea, I saw not a single sign on rod or line, in the trammel, or ashore in fish markets. The bass, once so common in the many Breton estuaries, seem to have left this coast. I do not think this is due to over-fishing, for there are fewer fishermen working alongshore than formerly ; nets have been laid aside in favour of pots for lobsters and crawfish, which fetch fabulous prices in France just now. The low temperature of the sea is probably the real cause of the lack of bass ; prawns and sand-eels were very rare this year, both excellent baits for bass and both driven off shore by the cold water. In contrast, the cold water has brought vast shoals of herrings into the mouth of the Loire as early as the first week in September.

Living most of the season on board, I crave your indulgence for my trammel, which supplies

the larder and allows me to fare well in remote bays and creeks where butchers' meat, when obtainable, is bullet-proof. Referring, then, to the trammel, while it was productive of whiting, soles, turbot, pollack, and the usual pouting and wrasses, red mullet was very scarce. Prawns were so small and scarce that I never used my hoop nets at all. By the way, next time you make a catch of prawns, eat them hot with plenty of pepper ; the recipe is that of a French light-house-keeper. Next to the bass, the sea-angler is wont to regard the pollack as the fish most worthy of his steel, and there is no doubt that he is a plucky fighter. All writers on sea-angling from Wilcocks to Aflalo have laid stress on the formidable first rush of the pollack, and here, I think, they have been inclined to let their imagination run riot. Certainly a pollack will make for home when hooked, but to say that, once the first rush stemmed, pollack are easily brought to the surface is overstating the case. I have caught many pollack—big and little—in many waters, and they have been game to the end.

A pleasant feature of pollack-fishing is the grand nature of the coast scenery in which they are taken, and I would not exchange one pollack off the Lizard for all the cod in the Downs. Where the rocks are thickest and the tide runs swiftest, off some ironbound headland in the blue Atlantic, there wait the pollack. And it was the blue seas and skies, the brown rocks and craft of all kinds from tanned-sailed mackerel boats to South

American liners that more than made up for poor sport.

In July I sailed up the Loire to Nantes, and bought a new dinghy—a very light, although eminently practical and seaworthy little boat, made by M. Rondet, to replace a tender too heavy and past her day.

I was now ready for a cruise up the Breton coast to Finistère, but the weather was not ready for me, and it was not until August 1, after much searching of heart and tapping of barometers, that a start was made. So soon as the flood tide set us afloat at 2 p.m., we cast off our warps, slipped our moorings, and motored out into the estuary of the Loire. Outside we found a light air from the west as we cleared Penchateau Point and began to run down the coast towards the Four Light off Le Croisic; here we found the sardine fleet and some mackerel boats. Once round the point we passed between the Four and the mainland; the wind was now fair and we hoisted all sail.

Towards evening, after a pleasant day's sail, the glass began to drop, and the wind, coming from the north-west, began to head us off. I decided to put into Port Navalo for the night, so that if the weather sickened on the morrow I should have the sheltered waters of the Inland Sea of Morbihan to explore. Soon we sighted Meaban Island, off the entrance to the Morbihan Sea. This island, although about 6 miles off-shore, was once joined to the mainland. A cove on the islet is still called the "wild boars' refuge." The

entrance is three-quarters of a mile wide, and Baden steeple, by a white mark, leads clear of all danger ; the channel lies close into the Port Navalo shore in the very shadow of the lighthouse.

Passing a very pretty green point, we suddenly opened up Port Navalo to starboard and ran in between a black tower and a red mark on the end of the breakwater. Here we let go in a pleasant, sheltered bay out of the tide in company with a handful of fishing craft and small yachts, one a new member of the 8-metre 50 class which is so popular in France. We entered the Morbihan about high water, so that the tide did not trouble us, although, except at slack water, a fierce current is met with at the entrance ; at springs it attains a speed of 8 knots. Even on the calmest day the water boils and swirls in great oily whirlpools and miniature maelstroms, and it has always that smooth, oily aspect of swift waters. In the harbour of Port Navalo we found sufficient water to enable us to lie afloat at all states of the tide ; moreover, the water was crystal-clear—a great treat after the shallow mud-holes of the Loire estuary. Ashore we found a scattered village of quaint little white and grey stone houses, a few tamarisks and anæmic pines, while along the foreshore lay crab-pots and fishermen's punts. A narrow strip of land separates the harbour on the Inland Sea from the open Atlantic. In a group of trees on this tongue of land is a pleasant hotel hard by a bathing-cove.

On going aboard after dinner at the hotel, we

found the wind was blowing fresh from the north-west, the water was "briming" with phosphorus, and over the smooth, swift-running waters of the great lagoon there shone a mystic light of pale green and orange. One felt an atmosphere of mystery quite in keeping with the countless monuments of the Neolithic Age that abound on the islands of the Inland Sea and on the mainland. We turned in early, well content with the opening day of our cruise. "We" consisted of my paid hand Corentin, but the "Viking's" berth was filled by two nephews, aged 14 and 11.

Saturday, August 2. After blowing hard from the west all night the wind came in north-west, and I was glad to be in such a pleasant anchorage as I heard the wind whistling through the rigging during the night. I determined to stay and explore the Inland Sea rather than undertake a dead beat to the westward outside. At first I intended to await the young flood at Port Navalo at 1 p.m., and sent the boys ashore in the dinghy to dig worms for a little fishing to pass the morning. Then I saw a small passenger steamer come in from Vannes and leave again almost at once, and, although ignorant of her speed, decided to try and stem the ebb up to Monk's Island. Whistling the dinghy aboard, we got under way at once and shot out of Port Navalo cove, setting a course along shore. This was all right until we came to a place where a ledge of rock ran out from the shore, making a kind of stone gate, through which the tide coursed like a mill-stream. To carry on

would have been sheer waste of fuel, so I steered across to the opposite shore of the Inland Sea and let go off Locmariaker, in the channel that leads up to Auray.

It would be difficult to find a more fascinating cruising-ground than this Inland Sea of the Morbihan. Morbihan, by the way, is the Breton for "little sea," "Mor" meaning sea and "bihan" little, and this Golfe du Morbihan gives its name to the Departement du Morbihan. The inhabitants state that there is an island for each day of the year; in reality, there are about forty islands, the remainder being little more than rocks or sand-banks. All these islands and islets and the mainland coast are green and often wooded, with innumerable coves, creeks and fjords cutting into the coast. Green grass, pine woods and round, lichen-covered granite boulders are the most pleasing features of the landscape. Pretty white caps and coloured aprons relieve the monotony of the black velvet dresses of the peasant women. Many of the islands are beginning to be spoilt by tall, modern country houses raking above the pines and firs. Everywhere are menhirs, dolmens and other relics of the New Stone Age; they are dotted about, not only all over the mainland and on many of the islands, but in the sea. At high tide there are cromlechs entirely under water. They emerge on the ebb to raise their hoary heads above the tide, draped in golden seaweed.

The local boats are called *sinagots*; they are black-hulled luggers about 25 feet to 30 feet over-

all, with two tall, narrow lugsails tanned a rich brown, almost red, and they have a modified spoon bow and very liberal beam. At first one thinks these craft must be very cumbersome, a survival of the Veneti fleet that was defeated by Cæsar, but once one has seen the *sinagots* turning to windward among the islands, one is surprised at their speed and handiness. I noticed several of the *sinagots* fitted with auxiliary motors, and there should be a ready market for the marine motor in the Morbihan. In addition to ferrying about among the islands, the *sinagots* are used for fishing both in the Inland Sea and out in the open Atlantic. In the Inland Sea and the Auray River are vast oyster beds. I can well remember quantities of oysters being shipped from Falmouth to be fattened in the Auray River. Owing to disease, oysters are very scarce in France, even the "Portugaises" being sold at a high price.

Across a blue sky heavy clouds kept scurrying from the north-west, obscuring the sun every five minutes or so. We pulled ashore in the dinghy with just enough water to float us over the oyster beds to the end of a long jetty. From a tiny tarred punt an ancient fisherman was working a little seine for dabs and flounders, which, although microscopic, were plentiful. Skirting the bay, we walked round to the village of Locmariaker, through narrow lanes and alleys, between tiny grey and white cottages, past a stone quay and venerable church, out into the open again, and up on to a heath to visit the Merchants' Table. This dolmen is one of the most interesting monu-

ments of the New Stone Age in existence. Wandering back to the jetty, past little cottage gardens gay with flowers and fig trees, we heard the skirl of the Breton bagpipes, for in the morning there had been a wedding, and now the guests were to dance on the quay. The wild Celtic music provided a fitting sequel to our morning among the dolmens, menhirs and monuments of ancient Brittany.

To illustrate the advantage of an auxiliary, let me tell you that, just as we were stepping into the dinghy to return aboard, a little sailing-boat came alongside. She had left Port Navalo half an hour before us with a couple of English tourists aboard, and, although the wind was almost fair, had been obliged to dodge all round the islands in order to avoid the worst of the current.

In spite of great silver clouds, it was warm enough at noon to lunch in the cockpit what time the tide turned. Here and there small cutters and red-lugged *sinagots* were cruising about among the green-topped islands of this mysterious lagoon of the Celtic dead.

At 1.30 p.m. we got under way, and setting sail switched off the engine, running rapidly past pine-clad granite islands with wind and tide in our favour; here again is the advantage of having an auxiliary motor; with favourable wind and tide the engine is given a rest, and a great economy realized by running under canvas. Whilst I conned the little ship up the main branch of the Inland Sea towards Vannes, my paid hand looked over the engine, and the boys tended the sheets

and picked up the beacons and marks with the aid of the glasses. It was a very pleasant sail.

We were soon abreast of the Monks' Island, which is the most beautiful in the Inland Sea. It was Saturday afternoon, and we had a good opportunity of studying the *sinagots* moored off their owners' cottages for the Sabbath Day's rest. Threading a granite-bound narrows, we passed Conleau, the pretty yachting centre of the Inland Sea, and, entering a straight cutting, at length found ourselves in Vannes Harbour. We tied up astern of a small steamer from Brest loading pit-props for Cardiff, and abreast of a couple of Danish three-masted schooners discharging timber. The cathedral, raking above a row of consequential houses at the end of the harbour, gave Vannes an air of considerable importance; indeed, it is the capital of the Morbihan Department. A pleasant afternoon was spent rambling about the old world streets of gabled houses, nor did we fail to visit the cathedral.

After dinner at an hotel we went aboard. It was a lovely evening, too good to waste in a stuffy harbour, so we started up the engine and ran down the cutting in the afterglow of the setting sun. Just as it was getting too dark to see far ahead I espied a wooden landing-stage and row of staithes, and here we tied up for the night.

We were amply repaid for the labour of our little evening run, for it was delicious to wake with the song of the birds in one's ear and the sun pouring through the open skylight. At eight

o'clock we cast off from the staith and motored off down to Locmariaker. Then we proceeded up the Auray River, past pretty green islands, a ruined Spanish fort, and a black buoy marking the site of a bridge built by Cæsar. Tall trees lined the steep banks. Moored off a handsome château, we spied a couple of nice-looking fast runabouts. Now we sighted the wooded heights and grey buildings of old Auray, and our further progress was barred by a quaint stone bridge. We knew Auray and its old-world charm for former visits. The ebb tide was running out and a fair wind blowing down the river, so back we ran to Locmariaker, out of the Inland Sea to Quiberon Bay, bound for Belle Isle. Off Meaban Island we had to lower the sails and motor out to the Teignouse Lighthouse in the teeth of the west wind.

The Teignouse Passage, between the Island of Houat and the extremity of the Quiberon Peninsula, like the Saints' Race and Four Channel, bears an evil reputation. It is well buoyed, and if reasonable care is used is not so bad as it is painted. Before approaching any of these intricate places, I made it a rule to surrender the helm to a companion and retire below with the chart and sailing directions for a short, concentrated study; if necessary, I make a few notes for quick reference, preferably on the back of a piece of cardboard, or a slate, or anything that will not blow away or double up too soon when wet. If possible, all races should be undertaken at slack water and with wind and tide coming from the

same direction. To-day the sea is calm and turquoise beneath a blue and silver sky.

After a pleasant run across we made Le Palais, the capital of Belle Isle, by 2.30 p.m. As usual during the summer we found the harbour packed with fishing craft from all the ports of the coast between Penmarch and the Vendée. Knowing the rough habits of the fishermen and their utter disregard for any craft but their own, I decided to go into the inner harbour, where I picked up an old berth just outside the dock gate. We pulled round the harbour in the dinghy to look at the various smacks. Every year sees an improvement in the type of sardine-boat on the Breton coast. The latest cutter-rigged craft are more dry and comfortable than the old luggers, and are easier to handle. I think, however, that the old rig was faster. The Bretons are very poor sailmakers, and, accustomed from time immemorial to cut lugsails, they have not yet acquired the art of making a cutter's mainsail set properly. Below, the crew have comfortable bunks and a cooking stove instead of sleeping on the bottom boards and cooking on a flat stone chosen from the ballast. Brick-coloured overalls have taken the place of blue, and peaked caps have replaced the old tam-o'-shanters, except in the case of the older men, nearly all of whom were drunk. Very hard is the life of the Breton smacksmen, and one is not surprised to learn that a certain amount of difficulty is beginning to be felt in obtaining crews for the sardine-boats. Life on the tunny-smacks, which are bigger, well found, and fish with hand

lines instead of heavy nets, is more popular and remunerative. We found a large crowd collected round a small yacht which lay dismasted alongside the motor life-boat. Chartered by some French naval cadets from Brest, the yacht had been dismasted during the night off Belle Isle, and in response to distress signals the motor life-boat had put out and towed her into port. Later in the evening the yacht passed into the dock to fit a new mast. The mast had snapped off, rotten, as usual, at the deck. With nightfall the glass began to fall and we were lulled to sleep by an alcoholic chorus from a neighbouring sardine-smack. At daylight, with a rattling of chains and creaking of blocks, all the little vessels put to sea in a downpour of rain. Until nine o'clock a steady drizzle fell. However, at that time it showed signs of stopping, and as I was anxious to find a quieter anchorage than Le Palais during the sardine season I put to sea. Outside I found a strong westerly wind and heavy swell; the boats were shooting their nets under the lee of the land. There was not much visibility, and all the appearance of dirty weather, so that I made up my mind to stay on the island rather than force a wet and dirty passage to the mainland. Therefore I put into the little tidal harbour of Sauzon. The ebb was flowing fast, but we just managed to scrape inside the breakwater and fix the legs in position before being left high and dry. A strong north-westerly wind now blew away the rain and clouds; and we basked in sun so hot that the awning was rigged up over the cockpit, there we partook of lunch.

A more delightful little cove than Sauzon it would be difficult to find. There are tall Spanish-looking houses dominating the quay on one bank and an expanse of open heath on the other. Innocent of mud, the creek runs inland for over a mile. The only craft are a few small sloop-rigged crabbers of a stout build found nowhere else in Brittany. After lunch we went for a long ramble across the island to explore the iron cliffs and crags of the wild coast facing the open Atlantic. Here one is, indeed, face to face with Nature—nothing but blue water and brown rocks, some grey with sea salt. Trees there are none; here and there deep caves eat into the face of the cliffs. We descended into one of these called the Apothecary's Cavern and gazed into pools of clear green water and listened to the booming of the surf outside. A pleasant feature of the island is the little valleys running inland, gay with heather and wild flowers. Returning aboard tired after the long, hot walk, I dived overboard down into the crystal-clear water of the cove, a delicious appetizer before dinner at the little Hôtel du Phare on the quay.

On the morning of Tuesday, August 5, I awoke to find a high glass, a light west wind and a thick drizzling fog. The latter cleared off about nine, and I sent ashore for provisions, but nothing but dry bread was forthcoming. After sitting about on deck watching the crabbers busy about their pots and gear I began to get restless and motored out to the Pointe des Poulains to try for a bass. Outside I found a certain amount of fog still

hanging about, but the wind allowed me to lay a course N.N.W. clear of Groix Island, right into the Aven River. So we gave the bass a respite and set all sail. Passing through the middle of the sardine fleet we were able to compare the boats of every port in South Brittany. Gradually Belle Isle faded into the fog and Groix rose from the sea.

Out in the open waters of the Bay of Biscay we rolled easily to the long seas of the Atlantic. We made an excellent lunch from our iron rations, and neither of my young companions was seasick. After lunch the wind freshened, blowing away every trace of fog, and we carried a spanking breeze right into the mouth of the river. Groix being the home of the tunny fishers it was not surprising to meet several of these yacht-like craft speeding towards the horizon with their bobbing poles already lowered for fishing. Sails of ochre, blue and white, grey hulls, silver clouds, waves of lapis luzuli—no wonder marine painters make their homes on this coast! On a rocky bluff above the estuary stood the lighthouse and white, fort-like Hôtel Julia. The trees are beginning to grow, but alas! two or three hideously new villas are very much in evidence. But it will take a long time to destroy the charm of sea and sand, green trees, granite rock and cornfields.

So hot was the sun at Port Manech that no sooner had we dropped our hook off the village than we dived overboard and swam ashore to bask on the sands. At dusk we shot the trammel in a place that had never failed to produce a lobster,

and on hauling in in the morning there was our blue friend sure enough with a grand retinue of crabs, pollack and pouting. After breakfast we got under way and took advantage of the flood up to Pont Aven. More fascinating than ever was the pretty little Breton river, more charming than ever the folk of Pont Aven, more delightfully noisy than ever the clacking water-mills.

After a chat with old friends at the Café Marechal we laid in a stock of fresh provisions, lubricating oil and petrol (thanks to fair winds we still had a reserve of paraffin) and saved the ebb back to Port Manech. I left the boys up at Pont Aven so that they could stretch their legs ashore and have a long-promised pull down the river in the dinghy. We went straight outside over the bar and let go in the shadow of the lighthouse. Here we were ready to run off for an afternoon's fishing, should the weather seem propitious. In heavy blows from the south and south-west the bar at Port Manech breaks badly, and one remembers in days gone by seeing the fishing-luggers from Rosbraz (a village up the river) standing on and off and waiting for the tide to cover the bar sufficiently to render its crossing safe. So soon as the tide had risen high enough a bugler used to come out on to the bluff and sound a call, when all the boats would cross the bar into the smooth water beyond. Rosbraz is a delightful little hamlet, and one can lie afloat in the stream off the village.

The Pont Aven boatbuilder has now moved down to Rosbraz, which has become so popular

as a laying-up station with the tunny-smacks that a new quay has been built.

Shortly after noon the dinghy arrived from Pont Aven, her crew ready to do justice to the lobster and crabs from the trammel. In the afternoon we went over the Glenan Islands to try for pollack, but only caught a few small ones. Returning to Port Manech in the evening we changed our berth, as I had been kept awake when we took the ground by pounding on the hard sand, owing to a certain amount of swell finding its way in from the sea. We went in under cover of the jetty with an anchor out ahead, and a stern-fast to a ring on the rock ashore. After a short, sharp swim in very cold water we climbed up to the Hôtel Julia to dinner. Here we met a marine painter accredited to the French Navy, whose yarns of life in Morocco kept us amused until a late hour.

It blew hard off the land all night, strong puffs coming down the river from the north. There was a fair wind along the coast, so after the breakfast coffee had been consumed we got under way with a spanking breeze off the land and smooth water. Crowding on all sail the engine was stopped and we enjoyed an exhilarating sail along the pretty coast of South Finistère. However reliable one's engine may be there are two safety-first rules that should be observed in every auxiliary: the first is to start up your engine and use it for the first ten minutes of the day, it can then be stopped and the yacht allowed to proceed under canvas if required—this will ensure that the engine is

running well before one is too far from land (an engine that has been warmed up at the beginning of the day will usually start up at once if required in an emergency); the second rule is to cast off the sail covers and have the sails all ready for hoisting, even if it is only intended to use the engine. Should the engine fail in a difficult passage the sails can be hoisted at once and the vessel kept under control. All motor-cruisers should have sails and use them whenever the wind serves. Sails steady a motor-boat in a sea-way, ease the strain on the engines, and reduce fuel consumption.

Our destination to-day was Concarneau. We threaded the passage between Raguenez and the Ile Verte, a short cut which presents no difficulties, but on rounding the Trevignon Point we chose another short cut, a more intricate one inside the Soldats Rocks. Although I have frequently been fishing and wild-fowling along this bit of coast in pre-war days I should have taken *Sylvabelle II* outside the Soldats but for the expert local knowledge of Corentin. It was a pretty sail, the rocks kept one on the alert, and Corentin had a tale about each one and told us their crack-jaw Breton names as we went past. Most of them were just awash. On the sands, ashore, I could see the dunes where we used to crouch in pits waiting for the evening flight. Here and there the peasants were loading seaweed into carts to serve as dressing for their fields. Creeks and the estuaries of streams run far inland, and many a pleasant hour may be spent in their exploration in the dinghy.

At the head of each of these creeks are tiny crabbing hamlets, and we met the black-hulled luggers thrashing out to the Soldats Reef to visit their pots. They are fast boats well handled, with an incredible press of sail for their size. Out seawards, towards the Glenan Islands, were their big brothers the sardine-smacks. All the blue Breton sea was dotted with craft, and we were clearly in the immediate vicinity of a big fishing port. The shore was beset with rocks stretching away seaward. Aged fishermen in blue caps and overalls, with long hair and matted beards, were dodging about among the rocks in tiny punts hauling crab-pots, bits of nets or conger lines. These were the superannuated sardine-fishers, too old for the smacks, old pensioners and the like, wringing a little money from the sea. Passing the breakwater we entered the outer harbour and let go in the shadow of the battlements of the old town.

It was noon and most of the fishing fleet being at sea we had the harbour to ourselves. Concarneau is now the centre of the fishing industry of South Brittany, and although less picturesque than formerly it has a pleasing air of prosperity. To the sea-lover and the artist it still makes a tender appeal. Nowhere do the sea, the boats and their crews, blend in such a wealth of colour. This is partly the result of the strange lights reflecting from the harbour, which forms a sort of mirror.

However prosperous and modern the shops may become, nothing can destroy the old-world charm

of the walled town set on an island in the middle of the harbour with battlements and a clock-tower rising from the sea. Of the cornflower-blue sardine nets and multi-coloured hulls and sails of the tunny-smacks I have already spoken in these pages, so let us now get under way and continue our cruise along the coast.

Upon rounding the end of the mole we met the first of the sardine fleet winging home with her catch. One by one, and then in groups, the boats came in from the open sea, spurred on by a spanking breeze.

We reached across the mouth of La Forêt Bay to Beg Meil Point. Here may be seen what is probably the oldest "mark" in the world—a whitewashed menhir. A long, sandy shore stretches from Beg Meil to Moustierlin Point. The inside channel being very complicated, we went away outside round the Voleuse Buoy and then ran in to pick up a red tower called the Taro. Our destination was Benodet, a big village at the mouth of the Odet River leading up to Quimper. No fewer than three lighthouses indicate the channel into the estuary. Very green and smiling are the banks. The lighthouse on the port hand, shimmering white in a clump of tall firs, looks like a Moorish minaret: this is Combrit Point. The entrance to the river is as foolproof as marks and buoys can make it. Very narrow is the entrance, between an old fort and a picturesque château; the estuary broadens out into a wide expanse of water, with Benodet and a quantity of villas in

green gardens on the starboard hand and with the charming hamlet of Sainte Marine to port. A steam ferry plies between the two places. Coasters and vessels waiting to proceed up to Quimper generally anchor in the stream off Benodet village in seven metres. At springs a three-knot tide is felt off the village; this increases to four and a half knots on the ebb tide down at the entrance. The maximum current up the river does not exceed three and a half knots. After the numerous tidal harbours up and down the coast it is a relief to be able to lie afloat at all states of the tides and in perfect shelter.

Instead of anchoring off Benodet I went across the river and let go off pretty Sainte Marine; we lay just beyond a thatched cottage in a cluster of pines with a greensward running down to the water's edge. Just inside of us were the black-hulled crabbers, and ashore an ancient Gothic chapel beneath the trees. Old salts sat on a little green in front of the chapel with one eye on the craft moving about the estuary and the other on the door of the village "pub." The latter is a perfect specimen of a Breton house of refreshment. The door is in the middle of the house. On the starboard hand lies a shop dealing in almost anything for the daily requirements of fisher and rustic; it is a combination of grocer, linen-draper and ship-chandler for the person of modest needs. On the port hand is the grog-shop, where fishermen and village worthies thump dominoes and consume incredible quantities of cider and brandy.

The following morning was bright and sunny with a high barometer, and we made a boating expedition in the dinghy up one of the creeks running far inland through densely wooded banks. These river expeditions formed a pleasing feature of our sojourn at Benodet, although we were wont to vary them with fishing trips outside the estuary, sometimes going so far afield as the Glenan Islands. Although I have visited them many times I have never tired of the Glenans; they are flat and devoid of scenery, yet full of poetry to a sympathetic eye. I have pleasant memories of the charm of whiffing for 10-lb. pollack outside the islands in the long blue water roll at the Jument, and the catching of giant prawns at low tide in a field of *zostera* off St. Nicholas. Grey mullet-fishing, stalking bernacle geese on the Loch Island, ratting with a Sealyham bitch and bolting rabbits into an old sardine net are among many other reminiscences of the Glenans, that ornament to the "Celtic fringe."

Saturday, August 9, was one of the last really fine days on the coast of Brittany that summer. Nine o'clock saw us motoring out of the river. A light south-westerly air enabled us to stop the engine and sail westward across the Bay of Benodet to Loctudy. The sun shone down from a sky of deep blue, and there was every indication that the wind would go round with the sun. Loctudy and Ile Tudy are situated at the mouth of the Pont l'Abbé River, and make a pleasant yacht station. The entrance is narrow and obstructed by a bar and a rock with a red tower on it. Once inside,

one is in a large shallow bay, with Loctudy to port and Ile Tudy to starboard ; the latter is no longer an island, being linked to the mainland by a long spit of sand and dunes. We anchored off the quay at Loctudy, where a little tramp steamer, the *Oak*, of Newry, was loading potatoes for the manufacture of starch. Loctudy is famous for the strength of its women stevedores, and we could see them scurrying about with sacks of potatoes on their backs, for the vessel was to sail on the afternoon tide. We crossed in the dinghy to Ile Tudy, a little fishing village of grey and white houses. It is a pleasant trip up the river to Pont l'Abbé, the capital of the district ; here are a castle on the bank of a lake and several interesting churches. In pre-war days I spent many happy hours in this estuary, fishing and picnicking in the woods on oysters. Alas ! the oysters are no more.

We returned aboard for a fish lunch which Corentin had ready for us in the cockpit. After another row round the lagoon and estuary we got under way. Outside, the sea was turquoise and still beneath the hot sun. The wind had entirely died away, and we were obliged to start up the engine to make Benodet. Seaward, towards the Glenans, were the brown sails of the sardine fleet, becalmed. These men refuse to have anything to do with motors ; they argue that, if they increase the quantity of sardines landed, the market will be cheapened. One of these days these arguments will be broken down, as they have been on the Vendée Coast, and they will all install engines.



Photo, Charles, Concarneau.

SARDINE AND TUNNY FISHERS ON CONCARNEAU QUAY.

A grand market is in prospect for the manufacturer who can overcome the objections of the Concarneau sardine-fishermen.

A boatbuilder's yard is a useful feature of Benodet; the shipwright is an honest fellow and capable of carrying out minor repairs. In 1909 I brought out to Benodet a sailing pram built for me in 1905 by Jackett, of Falmouth; this boat was much admired, and the local boatbuilder copied her for a Parisian novice. This year he was profuse in his thanks for my permission to run his rule over the little craft, and assured me that he had still a steady demand for these prams in various modified forms; naturally, they lack the finish of Mr. Jackett's work, although they are a tribute to his design. A more important yard is that of M. Craff up at Quimper, where some wholesome cruisers have been turned out, notably a little cutter, *Saint Gilles*, built to an interesting design by M. Quernel, for M. Serret, a well-known Breton yachtsman. Benodet village is a place of steep streets and shops containing most of the necessities of life despite a somewhat unprepossessing exterior. There is a delightful bathing beach of fine sands near a capital hotel—once a château—in a shady park overlooking the entrance to the estuary. Although we took most of our meals on board, we were often wont to dine at this Hôtel Ker-Moor. The surrounding country is very fascinating—a land of cider orchards, Druid oaks, and wild heaths dotted with granite boulders and clumps of pines. Down by the sea, from which it is separated by a low line of dunes, is a vast

tidal lagoon, the haunt of wild fowl, sand eels and mullet.

The glory of Benodet is the river. At 9.30 on the morning of Sunday, August 10, we got under way and ran up the river bound for Quimper. I have navigated all the tidal rivers of England and France, and am familiar with many of the fjords of Scandinavia and the west coast of Spain, but I prefer the scenery of this river to any other. The banks are covered with dense woods, oak and fir predominating. In many places crags and cliffs of granite overhang the tideway. Here and there tiny streams trickle down over the rocks. In the narrows are miniature whirlpools. Nothing is heard but the cry of a bird or the splash of a salmon. With the exception of one or two fine country houses and châteaux, the river is very wild, and one finds it hard to believe that one is but a few miles from a city of 20,000 inhabitants. The navigation of the river presents no difficulties, even the three-masted Danish timber schooners being towed up to Quimper at high-water springs. Two motor-boats carry on a passenger and towage service up and down the river; one of them is fitted with a Gardner engine.

We found Quimper in the throes of the annual fair. A beautiful cathedral, quaint streets and picturesque costumes constitute the chief charms of the capital of Finistère. There are pleasant shady quays, for two rivers—the Steir and the Odet—meet at Quimper. A few weeks before our visit the auxiliary yacht *Fair Lady* had been destroyed by fire, and we were always watched

by a crowd of small boys in the fond hope that a similar catastrophe would overtake *Sylvabelle II*. Sluicing down the deck in the morning was sure to be greeted by cries of "Look! they are afraid of catching fire."

Monday morning was spent in filling up the fuel tanks with paraffin for the first time since leaving Le Pouliguen, a considerable amount of our mileage having been accomplished under canvas alone.

At high-water, about one o'clock, we dropped down the river, well pleased to be out of town again, for the sun was scorching down from a cloudless sky. I can bear the hottest of weather so long as I can discard a collar and shoes. We tied up to the quay at Pors Meillou for lunch. This is a jetty used by sand barges in one of the most beautiful reaches of the river, and it was delightful to sit under the trees in a shirt and shorts far from the noisy fair at Quimper. My wife having joined us at Quimper, the boys made up their berth in the engine-room, so we were now five living aboard. But not for long. My paid hand had given a good deal of trouble ever since we had been in his native Brittany. I was obliged to discharge him. We spent the next fortnight at Benodet and in the river. Often we would anchor in some quiet creek, with our mast-head among the tree-tops, and land to explore the leafy lanes. Several yachts, both French and British, put into Benodet from time to time to shelter from the hard blows and heavy seas outside.

At length I began to think about returning south to our summer quarters at Le Pouliguen. We ran up to Quimper once more for stores and once again anchored off Pors Meillou, in surroundings that would have been more in the picture in British Columbia than in France, so delightfully out of the world is this little spot. My wife now returned to Le Pouliguen by train, and as the glass was on the rise, I determined to make a passage to Belle Isle. After lunch on Monday, August 25, I got under way at 2.30 with a light north-west wind and smooth sea. I was accompanied by an old friend and tried companion, M. Bargain, the river pilot. I did not care about making a passage out of sight of land with only two boys, who would have been in "Queer street" had I fallen overboard or been put out of action. Bargain was well suited too, for he had arranged to bring round a small yacht—from Le Pouliguen to Benodet, where it had found a new owner. He had just brought a small sailing boat with an outboard motor round from Dieppe to Benodet; indeed, he makes a speciality of this work. The Bretons are expert small-boat sailors—it is a gift born in them I think, and Bargain is perhaps the pick of them all. Many years ago we had some grand cruises on the coast between the Saint's Race and Lorient, in a 16-foot half-decked centre-board boat, built and designed for me by Messrs. Stow, of Shoreham. To-day, we fought our battles over again in the dry luxury of *Sylvabelle II*, a craft with an engine and a "lid."

We passed inside the Glenans, setting a course for the Basse Jaune Buoy, where we had a "pow-wow" whether to put into Groix for the night or carry on across to Belle Isle. It was decided to make the most of the fair wind and carry on, so Groix was left on the port hand and a course shaped for Belle Isle. In spite of the fact that we had all sail set and the motor running, we were unable to shake off a couple of sardine-smacks from Guilvinec, also bound for Belle Isle. Now the breeze freshened and drew ahead, so that our engine enabled us to keep a better course than the smacks, and we finally lost them, but they are fine boats, fast, weatherly, and well sailed by men who are not afraid to carry on. We were out in blue water now and great seas came rolling in with the night, as the sun sank to rest on a ruddy couch in the Western Ocean.

The wind now came almost north off the land and set up a following sea, causing the dinghy to sheer about. I regretted that we had not stowed her on deck; however, we had a lusty tow-rope, and nothing happened to spoil the enjoyment of a grand evening's sail. Ahead were the three lights of Belle Isle, on the port quarter we sighted the red eye of the Teignouse, and astern was Groix; this coast is lighted in an admirable manner. I had it in my mind to spend the night at Sauzon, for I could well imagine how packed would be Le Palais with fishing craft, but the tide would be too low to risk entering, the wind from the north making it a lee shore. Therefore we carried on to Le Palais, and it was a thrilling

sail out in the darkness with great rollers raising their heads astern. At length we opened up the leading lights, passed a Loire pilot cutter, and entered the harbour. As I had expected, the place was pitch-dark and packed with sardine and tunny boats. There was no chance of winning a way through to our old berth in the inner harbour, so we fought our way through to the berths set aside for yachts. In the darkness we rammed a tunny-smack, which loomed up ahead out of the night just as I got into reverse. No damage was done on either side, and there was nobody aboard the tunny-boat sufficiently sober to curse. One of the boys went ashore on to the breakwater with a warp, while Bargain dropped the hook and I backed her slowly in to the quay between the tunny-smack and a smart French yawl-yacht. It was 9.30 p.m., seven hours from Benodet.

After a very hearty supper we turned in and slept soundly in the shadow of the Vauban Fort until dawn. By six we had filled the tanks, looked hastily over the engine and motored out of the harbour. The sea was smooth and a very light air came out of the north-north-west. Passing the green, Cornish-like cliffs of Belle Isle and Kerdonis Point to starboard, with the Islands of Haedick and Houat, and the Cardinaux rocks to port, we made an uneventful passage to the Four Lighthouse, our sturdy Bettus-Loire engine running as usual like the proverbial clock. By nine we were off Le Croisic, and arrived at Penchâteau Point to find that the tide had not risen sufficiently

to allow us to enter Le Pouliguen. It was not until 11 a.m. that we were able to motor in and pick up our moorings, just in time to accept an invitation to lunch at La Baule Casino.

CHAPTER XI

On the Lower Loire

A TWELVEMONTH'S commission in *Sylvabelle II* had convinced me that I had at length evolved an excellent type of small cruiser for my purpose. She was a capital sea boat, yet capable of navigating the most intricate inland waterways. However, no ship is ever perfect, and I was aware of several matters that required altering in *Sylvabelle II*. Therefore, much against my will, I decided that it would be the better plan to lay up my craft at Nantes, where the necessary modifications, all internal, could be carried out during the winter at Rondet's Yard.

The middle of September found me at Le Pouliguen. Thursday, September 25, was fixed for the day of departure. There was a great deal to do; moorings were grubbed up from the bottom of the harbour, and a deal of spare gear brought on board from our shore quarters. The 24th was a vile day, and it blew hard from the south-west all night, with a falling glass, everything being against a start. However, we had a fair wind and tide up the estuary to sheltered water in the Loire. As soon as the flood floated us at 11 a.m. we cast off and motored down the narrow harbour with

two boats in tow—the dinghy and an old boat used for fishing. I had as crew my two nephews and a local fisherman. At once I could see there was a tremendous sea outside, but it would not hurt us as we simply had to run before it, smoothing our water all the time once we had passed Chemoulin Point. We steeplechased over the bar in style and then made our way across the shallow bay to Chemoulin Point. It was certainly blowing hard, and we encountered a very steep sea which caused us to roll heavily when it took us on the beam, as we opened it up in the gaps in the reef which shelters this bay from the open. My sails were bone dry and I was loth to wet them again before laying up, nevertheless we cast off the covers and had everything ready to get canvas on her in case of a breakdown in the engine-room, for we had to pass within a biscuit-toss of the rocks at Chemoulin Point, which was a lee shore. The Bettus-Loire knew that it was up to her to make good and never gave us a minute's trouble. It was not so with the boats, however. Of course these would not have been there had we not been on the way to lay up; they kept jerking back on their double painters, but nothing happened until we had smoothed our water past Chemoulin Point. Here the bigger of the two carried away her tow-rope and we had to circle round and pick her up, an evolution that was effected in a smart and seamanlike manner and was a credit to all hands. We had the Loire estuary almost to ourselves; the only craft in sight were a tug nosing her way out towards the Banche, and a pilot

boat running for shelter. It subsequently transpired that the tug was searching for the survivors of a small schooner that had been lost on the Banche during the night. Nothing is more absurd than to consider estuaries as suitable cruising grounds for the novice. Yet how often one sees boats described as being suitable for river and estuary cruising. By their very nature estuaries are bound to be rough, for they are almost always beset with sand-banks and bars, and swept by fierce tides.

I now had a look round the engine, and on coming on deck found we were off Saint Nazaire, the deep-water port of the Loire, a sort of annexe of Nantes. Modern and uninteresting, it is the haunt of coloured firemen and dock-sweepings. Beyond Saint Nazaire, stretching away to the Atlantic, is that vast extent of marsh and fen called La Brière, a *terra incognita* recently revealed to the world by Monsieur A. de Chateaubriant. On our starboard hand lay the old Fort of Mindin. The flood tide carried us rapidly up the stream past the oil port of Donges and the Brillantes Tower. The lofty spire of Donges Church appears to rise from the middle of the river, so flat is the bank. Paimbœuf is a decayed seaport badly hit by the upstart Saint Nazaire. It has a forlorn aspect from the river, with a tiny lighthouse, old-world houses and deserted quays lined with handsome trees. Brown and turgid is the stream of the great river, the longest in France and the most troublesome to keep open to navigation. Swift and shallow, millions have been spent on this great river. To

starboard we sight the entrance to the Canal de la Martinière, which is now abandoned. It was designed for the use of vessels of too deep draught to use the mainstream up to Nantes. Now it is turned over to a fleet of sailing vessels laid up in the hope of better days to come. A fleet of dredgers are constantly at work in a feverish endeavour to keep the Loire open to ocean-going traffic. I will spare the reader the catalogue of ancient villages and hamlets that line the banks up to Nantes. We pass a number of craft, tramp steamers, a couple of lobster-smacks from Noirmoutier returning after selling their catch at Nantes. Off Le Pellerin we have an argument with some fishermen who obstruct the stream. Great clouds are still coming in from the west, but the rain has stopped.

There is nothing in the nature of the Thames barges or bawleys on this river, not even those ably-handled wherries one meets on the Garonne. The fishermen of the Lower Loire have a rather nice type of open boat about 18 feet long with a standing lug ; some of them are fitted with single-cylinder motors. In due course we reach Nantes and tie up to a little ketch from Yeu Island. It has been a long day full of interest, a fitting end to a year's commission.

The Lower Loire has three items of historical interest. First we have John Knox, who was taken prisoner at the surrender of Saint Andrews Castle in 1547 and kept as a galley slave at Nantes Castle until 1549. Disguised as a student of the Scottish Catholic College in Paris, in 1745, the

young Pretender sailed from Nantes in the fast brig *Doutelle*, a vessel supplied by the Franco-Scot Walsh, a resident of Nantes. After his flight the Young Pretender returned to Brittany, landing at Penpoul, the tiny port of Saint-Pôl-de-Léon. The third episode is the terrible Noyades, when Carrier drowned in the Loire more than four thousand men, women and children. The unhappy prisoners were taken out in barges which were scuttled in the middle of the stream.

On the following morning we got the sticks out of her, and on the evening tide locked through from the swift Loire on to the placid waters of the River Erdre. I renewed my acquaintance with the cheery bargees and lock-keepers of Nantes. Built at the confluence of three rivers, the Loire, Erdre and Sèvre Nantaise, the old capital of the Dukes of Brittany is the metropolis of the inland waterways of Western France, and in some of the little grog-shops along the quays by the Erdre one may pick up a deal of useful information over a bottle of the local vintage.

The first time the British Army used inland water transport during the Great War was in the early autumn of 1914 at Nantes. Most of us remember those tragic days when the British bases were shifted round to Saint Nazaire and Nantes. A large depot for sick horses was established in a château some miles along the Erdre at La Chapelle-sur-Erdre, and one of the problems which faced the organizers was the supply of forage. It was finally decided to unload bales of forage from the supply ships in the Loire into barges and tow them

up the Erdre to a little wooden wharf in the château grounds.

The Erdre is the beginning of the canal from Nantes to Brest which was designed by Napoleon to escape the risk of his supplies being captured by the British blockading squadron off Brest. A good deal of this canal was dug by British prisoners of war. It runs through the very heart of Brittany, the most fascinating province of Old France. I was loath to leave my ship and made up my mind to take a farewell trip up the Erdre to see the first lock on this canal. One squally morning, with great clouds chasing out of the south-west, we cast off from Rondet's Yard bound up the river. Past old châteaux with green Thames-like lawns, we ran to Sucé, with its fleet of pike-fishers afloat in punts. Here the river turns off sharp to the right under a narrow arch. We are now in the Plains of Mazerolles, a replica of the Norfolk Broads without the crowds of wherries and pleasure craft. There were more pike-fishers, and here and there we put up wedges of duck and widgeon from among the reeds. There were veritable floating islands of reeds drifting about. Then we spied a lock cutting and tied up below Quiheix, the first lock on the canal. There are 237 locks and 360 kilometres before Chateaulin is reached. From Chateaulin the connection with Brest is made via the River Aulne and Brest Roads. Just ahead of us a very smart white barge was entering the lock. This was *Le Zephyr*, of Nantes, one of the best-kept barges I have ever seen. On deck were a small child and a puppy in charge of a pretty

flapper. Ahead of this craft was another barge that had just locked through under canvas, a most remarkable spectacle. With her tall square-sail set she sailed into the lock, brailed up her sail until the gate was opened again, and then ran up the canal before the following breeze. We had a chat with the lock-keeper's wife, who was skinning a rabbit. In the Canal du Midi I have frequently met lock-keepers similarly employed and can only conclude that rabbits are their staple diet.

From Quiheix we returned to the Plains of Mazerolles and proceeded up the mainstream of the river to Nort, a big village at the head of the navigable water. Here are water-mills, laundry barges and ducks. Ashore we found ox-carts laden with tubs of vintage grapes on their way to the wine-press. In the church is a statue to St. Christopher, the patron saint of bargees. Leaving Nort at 4 p.m. we motored straight back to Rondet's Yard, and on the morrow *Sylvabelle II* was hauled out for her winter's rest ashore.

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MOTOR CRUISING IN FRANCE

By
LESLIE RICHARDSON

THIS delightful book relates the odyssey of a small motor boat along the coast of Brittany, and through France (by Vauban's famous Canal des deux Mers) to the Mediterranean. The author has had two objects in mind: to make an entertaining record for those who may never follow his track save through his book and their own armchairs; and to advise and assist those who contemplate similar motor-boat cruises. He tells what equipment is desirable and gives all necessary information, but he also tells what to see, and his descriptions have an unusual angle because they are from the water instead of from the land.

The excellent illustrations give an additional interest to a book which will appeal to all who are fond of sailing, travel, and picturesque surroundings.

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